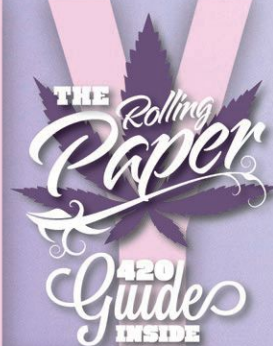


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KETRI: A MELTING POT OF
FLAVORS IN DOWNTOWN
SANTA ANA



CORKY NEPOMUCENO

up front

06 THE COUNTY

06 | MOXLEY CONFIDENTIAL | Defense works to undermine Little Saigon loan-sharking case involving alleged dirty cops. By R. Scott Moxley

08 | ¡ASK A MEXICAN! | Why do Mexicans say *¿Mande?* instead of *¿que?* By Gustavo Arellano

08 | HEY, YOU! | Some trivial behavior in Long Beach. By Anonymous

11 FEATURE

Laguna Hills' own Aloe Blacc makes it big in time for Coachella. By Nate Jackson

28 | DRINK OF THE WEEK | Vida at Anepalco's Cafe. By Gustavo Arellano

29 FILM

Joe: More Paris, Texas or Giant?
By Amy Nicholson

33 CULTURE

33 | Dana Harel dreams of war in Laguna. By Dave Barton

33 | TRENDZILLA | HB T-shirts for vets at Johnny's Saloon—trifecta of awesome! By LP Hastings

35 | Ralphy May gets it on to these songs. By Ali Lerman

36 MUSIC

36 | Haim's sister act. By Tessa Stuart

36 | TRUE STORY | The new Jesus—FINALLY! By Jack Grisham

38 | LED Day Club also prepares for Coachella. By Alejandra Loera

40 | LOCALS ONLY | Music spot Diego's prepares to conquer downtown SanTana. By Nate Jackson

45 | DIVE, DIVE, MY DARLING | Rolling with the earthquakes at Anaheim's Glo Room. By Taylor Hamby

in back

20 CALENDAR

Things to do while not falling on bullets and taking swords.

24 FOOD

24 | Wei Shian Noodles sells Szechuan-style noodles in Irvine. By Edwin Goei

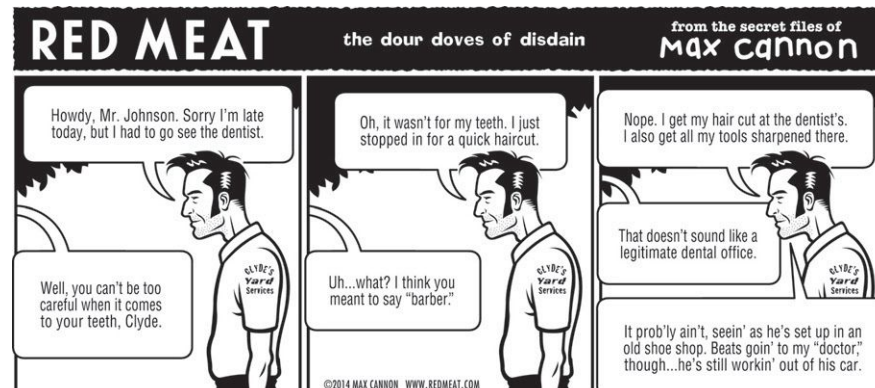
24 | HOLE IN THE WALL | Breakfast burrito bombs at Paul's Famous Burgers. By Gustavo Arellano

27 | ON THE LINE | Chris Brodeur of Tangata. By Anne Marie Panoringan

28 | EAT THIS NOW | Sushi at Tabi-Ji. By Edwin Goei

on the cover

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Cash-and-Carry Cop

Defense works to undermine Little Saigon loan-sharking case involving alleged dirty Westminster police officer

Eight months into the sensational U.S. Department of Justice case against a Little Saigon loan-sharking operation that allegedly used a police officer as an enforcer, it's clear

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»R. SCOTT
MOXLEY

Police Department officer Anthony Duong Donner, to get Santa Ana coffee-lounge owner Hanh Hong Le to pay 60 percent annual interest on \$170,000 in loans.

Defense lawyers are hoping to explain away Donner's regular presence at the now-defunct Café Miss Cutie on Harbor Boulevard by arguing the cop and other officers liked to frequent the business while in uniform and on duty merely "because it employed young, scantily clad women as servers."

As the *Weekly* reported on April 2, Le recently filed a civil lawsuit in federal court alleging that Do, Donner, Westminster PD Chief Kevin Baker, as well as officers Phuong Pham and Timothy Vu acted as a "team" that "conspired" to "frighten, pressure, harass, intimidate, assault and threaten" her into making payments on Do's "usurious loans."

According to Le's lawsuit, police officers "carried out drive-bys" at her residence in the patrol vehicles, entered her business and residence without permission, directed high-intensity spotlights from their patrol vehicles inside her shop while customers were present, harassed patrons with interrogations under false pretenses, sent threatening messages, initiated bogus traffic stops against her and her employees, and threatened her with arrest and imprisonment when she fell behind on making payments to the accused loan shark.

Despite those mafia-like undertones, Shaun Khojayan—the Los Angeles-based defense attorney for Do—is portraying Le's civil lawsuit and the government's criminal case as distortions of the facts. In court briefs, Khojayan claims his client was kind and generous to Le, even allowing her to live at his Fountain Valley home briefly while she struggled financially. He also insists the

cop's role in the deal was benign.

"As a favor to Do, Donner would pick up [Le's] loan payments from her business," Khojayan wrote. "When interviewed [by federal authorities], Donner admitted to collecting some money for Do and making two loans to [Le] himself."

But expect the defense to focus primarily on trying to undermine Le's credibility with the belief that if future jurors don't find her believable or honest, the criminal case collapses. It's



true her record isn't clean. The undercover federal probe began, for example, after Le paid a police officer \$3,700 in bribes and, according to a federal wiretap affidavit, openly discussed other attempts to bribe government officials from harassing her business. Khojayan additionally claims the alleged loan-shark victim was a wily businesswoman because she "sought and received (and did not pay back) several other private loans from other members of the Vietnamese community," according to a Feb. 28 brief.

"The credibility of [Le's] testimony is crucial and material to the defense of this case," wrote Khojayan, who wants all of the government's records on the businesswoman, including her "rap sheet," police reports, lawsuits, "drug use information" and "any other impeachment information."

At the heart of the trial will be wiretaps and text messages nabbed by the FBI during its investigation. Le incessantly

used her cell phone, a virtual treasure trove of data, with 7,632 text messages and 2,117 calls during one month alone. The government has provided the defense a small portion of that information for records it deems "pertinent": contacts between Le, Donner and Do. Khojayan—who has asserted Le may have concocted a loan-sharking story for the FBI as a way to avoid paying off Do's loan—wants Assistant United States Attorney Brett A. Sagel to release all of the captured records. Sagel responded

cast that purported to highlight anonymous Internet dating criminals who'd lured cash from unsuspecting women with promises of romance. Kelley Cahill appeared on the national broadcast with then-host Chris Cuomo and accused David Williams, once her live-in boyfriend, of being a "con man" who'd "cost her a fortune" and had a history of "preying" on women.

Last year, Superior Court Judge Franz E. Miller decided Williams had met initial legal burdens to proceed to trial based on the theory Cahill's comments were libelous. ABC settled with the plaintiff after Miller's ruling, but Cahill—who turned her alleged victimhood into a business that investigates potential boyfriends for paying clients—had her lawyers tell the appellate justices that her additional, negative descriptions of Williams in online posts, emails and in a YouTube video are constitutionally protected free speech not intended to be taken as factual by the public, but merely "hyperbole" designed to release emotional steam after an ugly breakup.

Justices Richard Aronson, Kathleen O'Leary and David Thompson were not impressed by Cahill's arguments for why the case should not go to a future jury.

"Williams presented a substantial amount of evidence to prove each of the foregoing factual assertions about him was false," Aronson wrote in the 34-page ruling. "[He also presented accounting evidence] that concluded Cahill benefited financially from her

relationship with him and actually owed him more than \$100,000 based on their contributions to the house [they bought together] and their agreement to share any profits."

The case now returns to Judge Miller's court.

"GUERRILLA JOURNALIST" TO VISIT

He has tormented National Public Radio, African-American activists, Planned Parenthood and liberal politicians, and now, self-styled "guerrilla journalist" James O'Keefe will speak to a Republican group on April 24 at an Orange County luncheon. O'Keefe, the 2013 author of *Breakthrough: Our Guerrilla War to Expose Fraud and Save Democracy*, is celebrated on FOX News but considered a political hack by the mainstream media. Contact Newport Harbor Republican Women at www.nhrw.org if you'd like a \$35 ticket to attend the Pacific Club event.

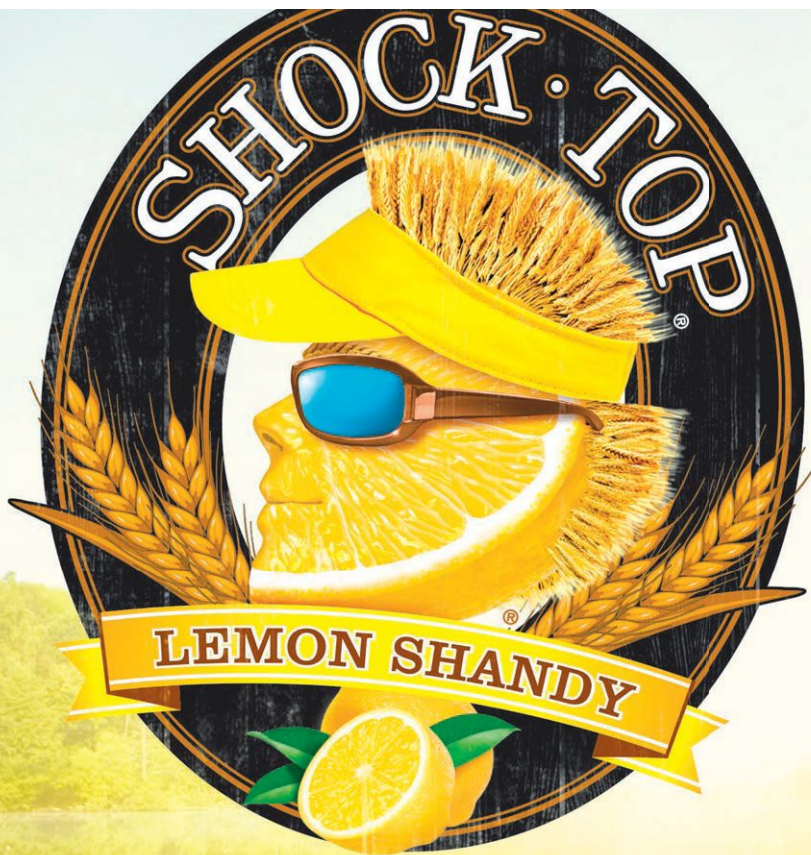
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by saying he will fully comply with any outstanding discovery obligations several months before the scheduled June 17 trial inside U.S. District Court Judge David O. Carter's Santa Ana courtroom.

Mark W. Eisenberg, Le's Irvine-based attorney, says his client suffered severe emotional distress from Do's use of police officers as hostile enforcers for extortion, and she deserves monetary damages. Carter will preside in the civil case, too. After Do, Westminster PD and its accused officers denied any wrongdoing and demanded a jury trial, the judge called for a June 2 scheduling conference inside Orange County's Ronald Reagan Federal Courthouse.

INTERNET DATING SCAM CASE TO PROCEED

Late last month, a three-justice panel at the California Court of Appeal rejected arguments by a Newport Beach businesswoman hoping to kill a libel lawsuit stemming from a 2011 ABC 20/20 broad-



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ask a mexican! »

» GUSTAVO ARELLANO



DEAR MEXICAN: Even though throughout the years since I came to the U.S. 20 years ago I have seen it happening with

less frequency, the use by Mexicans of the expression *¿Mande?* (Command me) has always struck me. I personally see it as a symbolic legacy of submission probably originating from the times of the Spanish conquistadores. Are you aware of any other meaning? What's interesting to me is that I've heard this expression coming more often from the so-called *pochos* than from Mexican immigrants.

Che Argentina

DEAR MEXICAN: I'm a Mexican-American with a dilemma. Why do most Mexicans respond by saying, "*¿Mande?*" while most other non-Mexican Hispanics respond with, "*¿Cómo?*" I asked around, and nobody has a right answer. I'm sure you will know 'cause you're a smarter-than-average Mexican.

Cheldingo

DEAR READERS: Out of all the folk etymologies that plague Mexican Spanish—like people thinking *gringo* comes from Mexicans making fun of the green coats of invading *gabachos*, or that the phonological similarity of *Michigan* and *Michoacán* is proof that the Aztecs came from the Midwest—none is more laughable than insisting the Mexican propensity to use *¿Mande?* ("Excuse me?") is a reflection on the perpetual Mexican inferiority complex. Yes, *¿Mande?* is a legacy of colonialism—Cortés used the term in his letters—but so what? So is the word *tortilla* and the corrido. All Latin American cultures keep parts of the Conquest alive in their regional Spanish, but there is no historical evidence that conquistadors in

Mexico demanded that their Indian or mestizo servants use the formal *¿Mande?* instead of the informal *¿Que?* or *¿Cómo?* or *¿Perdón?* (words that Mexicans also use, by the way) to maintain racial superiority. Mexican Spanish merely follows Spanish pronoun rules—imagine that! You want real linguistic subservience? Try *su merced* (your mercy), which South Americans use in favor of *ustedes*. Now *that's* a wuss culture right there.

DEAR MEXICAN: My parents are immigrants from Mexico who came here and had me and my brother and sister. Of course, they've both retained some rituals that aren't very necessary and would no doubt seem odd to the average American observer. One I've never mustered enough courage to ask about is this habit of placing a large stone or a log behind one of the rear wheels. I've assumed it's so the car won't roll away because of gravity, but I know this isn't necessary when in park. Or maybe it's to ward off grand theft auto? Are automobiles in Mexico just not largely reliable or is it a symbolic action to prevent theft?

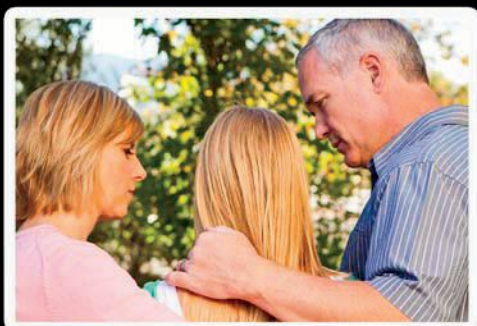
Rocky Llantas

DEAR PEÑASCOSO TIRES: Are you kidding me? Putting a log or rock behind a tire is the Mexican version of LoJack. The smart Mexican gets a rock or log craggy or pointy enough so that anyone who tries to make off with their car will immediately puncture the tire or wreck the rim when they try to zoom off. After that, all you have to do is follow the skid marks to wherever the thieves left the car. Simple, ingenious and cheap: the Mexican way.

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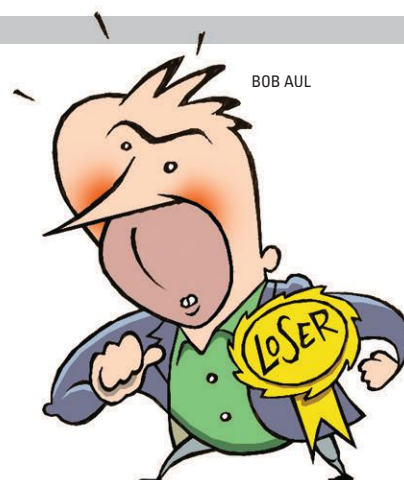


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HeyYou! » ANONYMOUS

Trivial Behavior

I was guest-hosting as quizmaster at a Long Beach bar and grill for its weekly trivia night. You were on the team that gave an incomplete answer to a certain question, so I had to tell your group that sorry, no, I could not award you a point for that answer. At the break, one of your teammates attempted to civilly persuade me to let you guys have the point. Then you walked up. Coolly and menacingly, you said to me: "Don't cross us. We know where you live, you four-eyed fuck." Even your own teammate looked surprised as you walked away. The rest of your team seemed nice enough, and after some thought I decided to award them the point after all. Why? Because I felt sorry that they were saddled with



a macho prick like you, whose negative asshole energy was surely diminishing the group's collective brain power. At the night's end, when the scores were tallied and prizes were bestowed, your team did not win, place or show, you bullying sack of shit.

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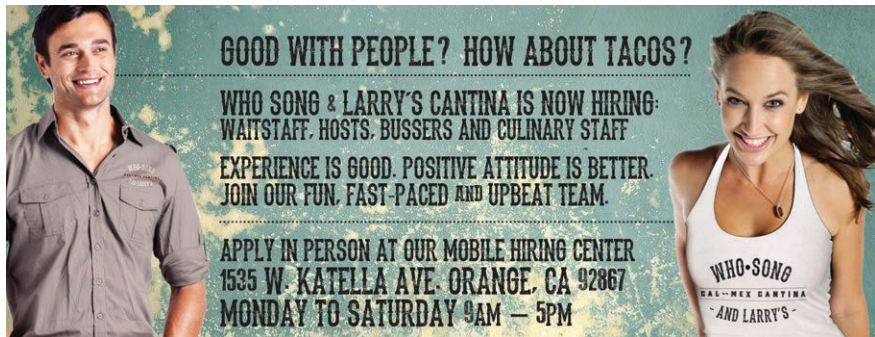
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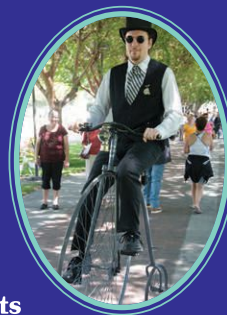
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A photograph of Aloe Blacc, a Black man, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored shirt and a dark fedora. He is looking down and to the side, with his right hand touching the brim of his hat. The background is a solid, muted purple color.

LAGUNA HILLS NATIVE ALOE BLACC
GETS READY TO CONQUER COACHELLA
WITH HIS UNSTOPPABLE MUSIC

WORDS BY NATE JACKSON
PHOTOS BY TIMOTHY NORRIS

HE'S THE MAN

Even hiding behind his icy silver aviators, it's apparent that Aloe Blacc's mind is somewhere else. Small talk ricochets off his lenses on a dark elevator ride up to the seventh floor of a downtown Los Angeles artist loft for a midday photo shoot. He's on a tight schedule of interviews and appearances these days, nearly every hour accounted for from dawn to dusk. Nevertheless, a recent marathon run of nearly two-dozen gigs at South By Southwest—including an appearance on *Jimmy Kimmel Live*—to promote his best-selling album, *Lift Your Spirit*, has barely dented him.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12



HE'S THE MAN

» FROM PAGE 11

He came to the shoot prepared, toting a pressed, black Armani suit jacket and white dress shirt on a hanger hooked over his sturdy index finger; the leather boots on his feet are impeccably shined. But Blacc is worried he's forgotten something. After taking a few steps into the loft, his left hand grazes the brim of the gray tweed porkpie hat on his head—and then he remembers.

"Ah, damn," he says. "This is the wrong one."

He goes downstairs. At the open crosswalk, his hand juts out to stop oncoming traffic before he glides to his unassuming green Volvo sedan. He pops the door and grabs the right lid—a black fedora snagged from his music video shoot for "Wake Me Up," the second single on *Lift Your Spirit*. Prior to its release, the folk-tinged track got a major profile boost thanks to a version he sang and co-wrote for Swedish DJ Avicii, which became the fifth-best-selling dance track in SoundScan history; as of this writing, it's reached No. 1 on the pop charts in 102 countries.

Blacc holds the hat to the sunlight and studies it briefly. "Here we go," he says with a smirk. "This one should go perfect."

Though a seemingly small style detail, it's the kind of thing Blacc never misses. He lives for those careful, considerate decisions and style points, controlling every aspect of his career, his sound and his look. The deep pauses he takes before answering interview questions are a sign that he isn't an artist who'll say anything to get your attention—only the right thing. As a singer, his meat-and-potatoes delivery is expressive yet attainable; he's

the kind of vocalist you can comfortably sing along to and still feel hip as hell.

Blacc's approach becomes all the more important with each passing day. The Laguna Hills native is on a meteoric rise that started with the hit single "I Need a Dollar," off his sophomore solo album, *Good Things*, and continues with *Lift Your Spirit*'s sweetly boastful platinum-selling single "The Man," currently featured in a national TV ad campaign for Beats By Dre headphones. Of course, the stakes are much higher now for the artist born Egbert Nathaniel Dawkins III, the only black kid at Laguna Hills High School way back when. In the midst of release week, all the hubbub is exciting, but also amusingly strange to the indie-minded artist—especially after nearly 20 years on the grind.

"You release a record, the first week is not the only week it's available," he says as the makeup artist's brush flutters over his face by the loft's large window overlooking downtown. "You expect people to warm up to it. There's a lot of activity around promotion and marketing. But I'm in it for the long haul, not just for the first week."

Since the start of his career in 1995, Blacc has learned a thing or two about long hauls. There's no shortage of press tracking his route from backpack rapper to star soul singer. But that's a pretty limited perspective on a guy with a deep discography that's dabbled in multiple genres: dancehall, salsa, haunting spaghetti-western operas, touches of funk and psychedelic rock and now (thanks to Avicii) EDM club anthems. It's taken a long time to channel that eclectic energy into a signature sound. And despite the growth of a long-developing career throughout Europe, it's taken even longer to get his due in the States. But while

jumping from an indie mindset to a major label has changed Blacc as a businessman, it hasn't deterred his idea of what a good artist is—someone who does whatever the hell he or she wants.

It's that kind of swagger that earned him a slot on the biggest stage in SoCal: this year's Coachella double weekend. He'll be there April 11 and again on the 18th, the same day as Outkast, the Knife, Chromeo, Zedd and tons more. Until this year, Coachella was one of those gigs Blacc said he could never really see himself playing, mostly because the bulk of his success has been on the other side of the world. But as he prepares to set foot on the Indio Polo Fields with his backing band, the Grand Scheme, it seems America is finally willing to accept that Blacc isn't lying when he sings in a melody reminiscent of Elton John's "Your Song," "You can tell everybody . . . I'm the man, I'm the man, I'm the man."

Detroit Bar's walls seemed to make extra room for the clubgoing faithful on its last night of existence. On Feb. 28, the Costa Mesa staple closed its doors after 13 years with one last huge, sweaty, beer-swilling hip-hop crowd. From the sonic pulpit at the center of the stage, DJ Exile's final tribute to the local bar came in the form of beeps, bass and metallic bangs as he held up an MPC beat machine like a severed head, chopping at it with ninja-like precision. The light-speed sounds he made were incredible; the crowd cheered and threw up their hands for his closing set, which featured his longtime rapping partner Blu. Exile and LA-based Blu started releasing albums together in 2007. The two were actually introduced by Blacc, Exile's childhood friend and first rapping partner. Together,

Blacc and Exile (a.k.a. Aleksander Manfredi) started their DJ/MC duo Emanon—"No Name" spelled backward—in 1995.

"[Aloe and I] had done a lot of shows [at Detroit Bar]," Exile says, "and it was only right for me and Blu to be over there and close it out and rock the house one last time." Had he not been touring Europe at the time, Blacc might very well have been performing with them.

During Detroit's heyday, Emanon rocked the stage often as part of a local hip-hop head gathering called Abstract Workshop, run by Josh One, Kosta "Cocoe" Tsimahidis, Scotty Coats and Jud Nester. Emanon's playful street smarts and braggadocio folded easily into the underground scene—but chances are you wouldn't recognize Blacc back then in his striped polo shirts, popped collars and baggy jeans at the original Koo's Cafe in Santa Ana.

"Everybody in hip-hop in Orange County was going there. The scene was really tight-knit," Blacc says. "Cocoe, Jud and Scotty Coats started this party and it was a great opportunity for everybody to get together and hang out, do shows for the locals."

Aloe and Exile also tested their mettle in LA at revered hip-hop nights such as the Root Down and Koo's Cafe in Santa Ana.

"Luckily, we found our people at Koo's Cafe [and Detroit Bar]—all the social rejects, graffiti heads, punk rockers, MCs, DJs, beat heads," Exile says. "Most were minorities there, be it race or not; it was a pretty evenly mixed crowd. We found a home to scream our thoughts and destroy our records with our impromptu turntable percussion, freestyle dancing, spoken word and rapping."

Though they've been dormant as a duo for some time now, those years of

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HE'S THE MAN

» FROM PAGE 12

backpack-rap hustle were the launching pad for both men—Blacc's rising star in the pop world, Exile's career as owner of hip-hop label Sound in Color and producer for the likes of Jurassic 5, Pharoahe Monch and Snoop Dogg. A mutual friend brought the two together in 1994, before Blacc had ever performed for anyone. They met after a night of partying that found them with a group of friends hosting a cypher in a Denny's parking lot around 1 a.m. Soon after, the two were propping up microphones in Blacc's family kitchen, practicing the art of weaving loops, scratches and rap verses on a 4-track recorder. They sold dubbed, two-sided versions of their music with Exile's turntablism on one side and their hip-hop songs on the other.

As far as earning credibility as an OC hip-hop act touring around the country, Exile says their ability to hone their craft made their style fit in anywhere. And in



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their hometown, they always managed to find the right audience willing to listen.

"We knew if we could perform in the [hip-hop] circles we looked up to that no one could tell us shit about nothing, and we would be accepted by making dope music and never giving up," Exile says.

As Emanon expanded from their OC/LA nest to national and European tours, Exile and Blacc became seasoned performers by their early 20s. They were able to win over crowds in France, Germany and Italy where, for the most part, audiences couldn't even understand them. "Nobody was speaking [English] as a first language," Blacc says. "So I had to create something about the music that was beyond words, and I had to do it physically with my energy. That's sort of what I've continued to do as a singer."

Though Emanon was his main gig, Blacc toured separately with hip-hop group the Lootpack and did other projects. He says it wasn't until 2002, when he toured with DJ/producer Oh No (younger brother of LA beat scene legend Madlib), that he really refined his singing. "[Oh No] gave me a beat CD and I recorded a whole album over it," Blacc says. "I think that's when the process started, and over the years, it's just been about learning how to use my voice."

It's about 2 p.m. when photographers for our cover shoot decide it's time to venture around the block and shoot some photos in a nearby alley. Blacc doesn't notice a few lingering stares as cameras snap candid shots of him walking, then leaning casually against a brick wall next to the giant blue door of the Continental Club.

In conversation, he's considerate of the answers he gives about fame and its effect on an artist like himself, whose business smarts have been as much a part of his success as his musical abilities. He's been

featured as a mentor on the hit reality TV singing competition *The Voice* and has done a campaign of interactive web ads for Lincoln. Some would argue he's edged past the point where returning to a normal, quiet life is possible. Blacc disagrees.

"I could always go back to making songs in my bedroom if I want," he says before a long pause. "But I don't want to. I prefer to make songs that everyone in the world likes, with some restrictions . . . without making it directly pop."

Even for someone as calm and collected as he is, the part of Blacc that explodes into a natural showman when he dons a suit, takes off his glasses and faces a crowd is too strong a drug to ever consider anything else. Onstage, he's all smiles, rocking the dapper look he's cultivated, and unafraid of employing some ankle-twisting James Brown footwork during his upbeat festival sets.

With six-figure recording and licensing deals in his pocket, Blacc is a long way from being the guy who claims to have written the lyrics for "I Need a Dollar" after getting laid off. He talks about his old job as a business consultant at Ernst & Young, which he walked into after graduating from the University of Southern California with a degree in psycholinguistics. The layoff after college was devastating, but he says it gave him the opportunity to be CEO of his own future. More important, it gave him the time to work on his new sound.

By 2003, he'd officially launched a solo career, releasing two EPs as Aloe Blacc. One of his tracks—a mellow hip-hop influenced cover of Sam Cooke's "A Change Is Gonna Come"—hooked the ear of Stones Throw founders Eothen "Egon" Alapatt and Peanut Butter Wolf (a.k.a. Chris Manak). Alapatt, former manager of the label, says he got turned on to Blacc after seeing him a number of times

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HE'S THE MAN

» FROM PAGE 14

performing solo at the Root Down. Blacc sang, often accompanied by a guitarist strumming Brazilian rhythms.

The vocals he'd recorded over Oh No's beats blossomed into a full stylistic transition from straight hip-hop to a fusion of futuristic urban and Latin soul. Immediately excited about what they heard, Stones Throw signed Blacc to a two-album deal in 2006 not as a rapper, but as a singer. The switch didn't faze Blacc, who ventured into the studio to produce his label debut, *Shine Through*. At that point, his music had a scatterbrained charm about it—one part hip-hop, one part soul, one part Latin, coated in bravado and raw ego. Tracks like "Are You Ready" showcased boastful lyrics about finesse, street knowledge and champion-style lovemaking, a very different side of Blacc than the one fans are familiar with today. Though critically praised, the effort was a commercial flop.

"It lost a lot of money," Alapatt says candidly. "And even though some people really loved Aloe, for a lot of people it didn't resonate with them."

Despite the failure, Blacc worked on improving his sound,

his direction and the maturity of his lyrics. He spent roughly two years recording his follow-up album, which Wolf promptly rejected. "To be fair, it was kind of a mess," Alapatt says. "It was all over the place, there was no really catchy songs, it really wasn't working and it didn't really have the charm that the first record had."

Wolf wanted to drop Blacc; Alapatt disagreed. After some arguing, Alapatt was allowed to scrape up about \$8,000 to revamp the project, and he took Blacc under his wing. He enlisted the help of New York production team Truth & Soul to craft a direction for the album that aimed to harness the dark soul of Bobby Womack and the off-kilter pop sensibili-

ties of Serge Gainsbourg with a spike of social consciousness tucked in between. "I knew he liked more esoteric soul music," Alapatt says, "so if I could get a couple different artists who we could share appreciation of, then maybe we could find a way to breathe some fresh air in this record."

The project was recorded in New York and took about two years to finish with the help of Truth & Sound. What emerged shocked most everyone who heard it. Not only was it a complete, focused tribute to Womack and other soul heroes like Al Green, Curtis Mayfield and Bill Withers, it also sounded surprisingly fresh and of the moment. To top it off, the album's lead single, "I Need a Dollar," was picked up for a sync license by HBO for *How to Make It in America*. In Europe, which hadn't forgotten Blacc, the album topped the charts in multiple countries.

Even then, Alapatt says, Wolf didn't show much interest in the project and tried shelving it again before it could come out in the States. Seeing that the label obviously wasn't the place for him once his contract was up, Blacc worked out an agreement with high-powered manager Simon Fuller and his company XIX Entertainment, and Universal Music Group (Interscope is one third of the umbrella cor-

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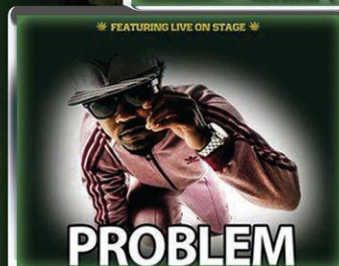
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HE'S THE MAN

» FROM PAGE 16

poration). He left Stones Throw, despite Alapatt's attempts to get him to stay.

"I had read somewhere about Stones Throw saying we didn't want [Blacc], but no we *did* want him," Alapatt says. "I wanted him and everybody wanted him, but he knew it was time to go." (Peanut Butter Wolf declined to comment for this story.)

Throughout 2010 and 2011, Blacc successfully headlined several European and North American tours with Fuller as his mentor—though the two never formally entered into a manager/client relationship. By the time Blacc was ready to sign on the dotted line with Interscope for his third album, he decided to become his own manager, a move that stunned a few music industry insiders. But for Blacc, it felt natural, and he openly admits something few artists would: "Even today I would say music is my hobby, and the business of music is my profession," he says.

Various reports state that Fuller has supported Blacc's transition to self-management and that he continues to be a source of advice for the budding superstar. "One of the most important things Simon taught me was that ownership is not always the most important thing," Blacc says. "But control—who controls the copyright, who controls the intellectual property—is what matters as much as ownership."

In February, Fuller offered a statement to *Billboard*. "Aloe is a unique artist," he said. "He defines what an artist can achieve in these ever-changing times. There is no aspect of his career that he isn't in complete control of and he should be an inspiration to all artists."

That kind of move isn't for everyone, but it's paid off nicely for Blacc, who ushered in yet another chapter in his career: a publishing deal with Warner/Chappell worth about \$2 million. He entered the studio in 2012, working primarily with seasoned producer DJ Khalil, as well as Pharrell Williams and Harold Lilly. But as it turns out, Blacc says one of the guiding forces in the direction for his new album—significantly more upbeat than the dark soul of *Good Things*—was his father.

Since he was a kid, Blacc's parents—Panamanian immigrants who moved to OC in the late 1970s—always supported his music. He learned to breakdance at age 4; he was writing hip-hop lyrics and playing the trumpet by age 9. Blacc remembers his father buying a gargantuan stereo system so there was always loud music on the weekends and there were parties at friends' houses with Caribbean music, laughter and table-slapping games of dominoes.

"What you know about Latin people, like when you think about the stereotypical Latin . . . that's my family," says Blacc, whose Panamanian roots were ever-present in his hip-hop style, and in his singing (sometimes in Spanish). On tracks from Emanon's album *The Waiting Room* or *Anon & On EP*, you can hear Blacc's soul music prowess taking shape.

Blacc's father epitomizes the 1970s Latin soul brother. To this day, he still wears pastel shirts, butterfly collars, bolo neckties with turquoise stones and mod-style Beatles boots. It's a style Blacc

would eventually jack when it came time to match the look of his retro sound on *Good Things*. "He definitely suggested that after the last album, because it was so focused on the issues and problems, that I make more positive music," Blacc says. "Fans don't just wanna hear about the problems, they also wanna hear about something that makes them happy."

Lift Your Spirit reveals both Blacc's musical adventurousness and attention to nuance when it comes to his folk/soul hybrid. Produced by Pharrell Williams (who is also performing at Coachella this year), "Love Is the Answer" is an anthem full of big, brassy, old-school soul. Blacc's intimate, stripped-down version of "Wake Me Up" also appears on the track list, as do such eclectic gems as the guitar-fueled "Can You Do This," the bluesy, hip-hop-inspired stomper "The Hand Is Quicker," and smoldering R&B balladry of "Red Velvet Seat." The haunting, anti-war message of "Ticking Bomb" comes wrapped in ghostlike backing vocals and tense, ominous rhythms, matched by Blacc's sense of urgency in his soaring vocal performance. Fulfilling Blacc's central mission of instilling joy in his listeners, songs such as the gospel-inspired, groove-heavy "Lift Your Spirit" and the harmony-soaked epic "Eyes of a Child" are each a powerfully pure celebration of life and love.

The album's mantras ultimately serve as a reminder not of where society is today, but rather where Blacc is today as a person and as an artist. He has plenty to be happy about. There's his career, of course. And his wife, Australian rapper and activist Maya Jupiter, recently gave birth to a baby girl, Mandela. "We have chuckled to ourselves a couple times, wondering if this is all really happening," Jupiter says. "But we know who we are and why we are in this business. Fame has never been a goal for either of us. It's about the positive change we can make in people's lives."

Though his year seems firmly scheduled with promo and business-related duties, there are slices of time carved out to stray from the looming album cycle ahead. That includes picking up the mic as an MC once more to reconnect with Exile on new Emanon tracks. Blacc is also carving out time to work on Artistiv, an LA-based entertainment company he started with his wife and Chicano musical *curandero* Quetzal Flores to help socially conscious musicians, visual artists, dancers and other creative types in need of exposure and career development.

"It's a really good feeling to walk into a CVS and Aloe comes on over the speakers," Exile says. "Me and my buddy look at each other, like 'Yep, once again.' We'll just start laughing, like 'holy shit.'"

Every iota of Blacc's current success has depended on his ability to follow his vision, trusting his gut and aural instincts in whatever new direction they may take him. It's the same inspiration that ensures the next Aloe Blacc record will not be a rehash of *Good Things* or *Lift Your Spirit*. "I paid respect to my heroes with the music I've done and I'll keep moving to the next style and new experiences with music," he says. "And whatever feels good, I think that's the most important thing. Whatever feels good."

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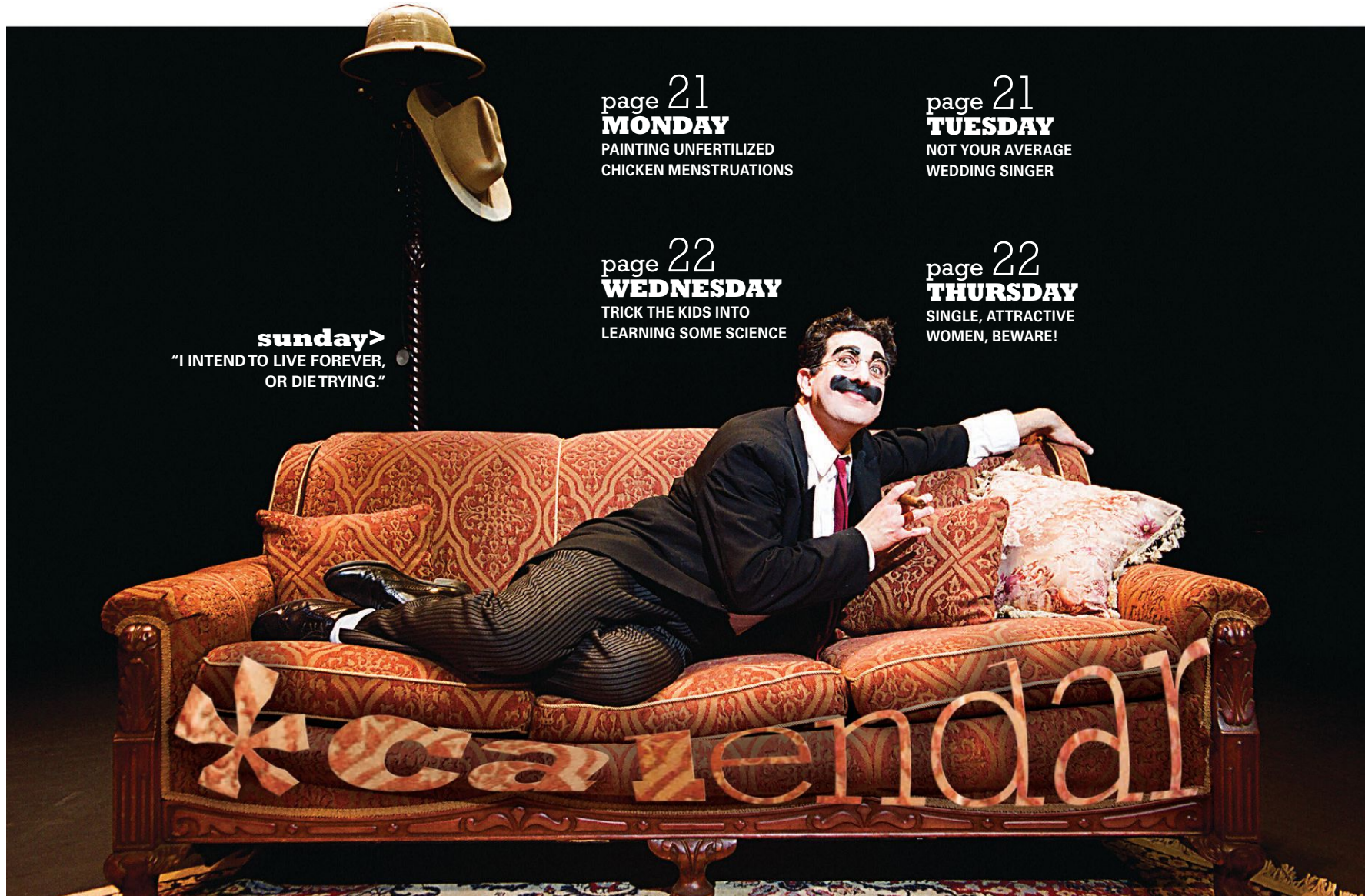
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fri/04/11

[CONCERT]

Hell's A-Comin'

Devil's Brigade

This band are more than a side project. In fact, Devil's Brigade are headed at velocity toward something more like a supergroup—it's Rancid (and Operation Ivy!) bassist Matt Freeman with Hunns (and way more) guitarist Rob Milucky and X's DJ Bonebrake. And their particular breed of punky rock & roll is even more raw than you'd expect, thanks to Freeman's roar-from-the-gutter vocals and extremely percussive handling of the standup bass. On paper, they've only had a few releases, most of them clustered around a 2010 full-length on Rancid-y label Hellcat. But when they're onstage in a red-lit room at full volume, you'll really feel the history behind them catch fire. Like the T-shirt promises: Punk Rock Since 1966.

Devil's Brigade with Left Alone, Death March and Hardship Anchors at Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292; www.alexsbars.com. 9 p.m. \$10-\$12. 21+. —CHRIS ZIEGLER



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[BURLESQUE]

Booze and Babes

BEER-LESQUE

In perhaps the most successful marketing ploy since the dawn of advertising, Oregon's Deschutes Brewery wants everyone in SoCal to get a taste of its product, so it's pairing beer with scantily clad ladies. Tonight at the swankiest joint in Long Beach, Beer-Lesque brings everyone's two favorite vices together for a wholesome night of debauchery. Imbibe on a wide selection of craft beer (provided by Deschutes Brewery, of course), nosh on savory snacks (courtesy of the Federal Bar's kitchen), and raise your heartbeat watching seductive burlesque performances and kitschy variety acts. Emceed by Naughty Pierre, Beer-Lesque is unabashedly naughty, absurd, playful, maybe a little bit drunk—and we're totally all right with all of that.

Beer-Lesque at the Federal Bar, 102 Pine Ave., Long Beach, (562) 435-2000; www.thefederalbar.com. 7 p.m. \$5. 21+. —ERIN DEWITT

sat/04/12

[THEATER]

Femmes Fatal

Ravenscroft

Considering the annoying lack of interesting female characters on TV and in movies, we're delighted to check out Mitchell Nunn's *Ravenscroft*, the newest production to hit the Long Beach Playhouse.

In it, we follow Inspector Ruffing, who finds himself at a secluded house investigating the death of a crumpled body named Patrick Roarke. Then we meet not one, but five wonderfully complicated, clever women of the household—each of whom may or may not be a dangerous killer. There's Marcy, a governess with a scandalous past; Mrs. Ravenscroft, the flirtatious lady of the estate; Gillian, the "charming but demented daughter" (who might be our favorite already); Mrs. French, the intimidating house chef; and Dolly, a frightened housekeeper. Who done it? There's only one way to find out.

Ravenscroft at the Long Beach Playhouse, 5021 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 494-1014; www.lbplayhouse.org. 8 p.m. Through May 10. \$27. —ERIN DEWITT

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[FESTIVAL]

Coming Up

Milhouse

San Clemente Garden Club's Garden Fest

It's springtime, folks, and that means one thing: growth. Obviously, it's great if during the season you plan on tending to the needs of your fellow man, aiding in the positive growth of mankind—but we know that shit ain't gonna happen. So we suggest you keep it simple and instead grow a garden. The San Clemente Garden Club wants to help you bring new life into the world with its Garden Fest. In addition to a plant sale featuring a selection of strawberries, there are also programs for the kids, a garden flea market and a funky container contest that anyone can enter. Be sure to buy a little something because your money will be put to good use through civic beautification and horticultural scholarships—this is your chance to be a two-time winner. Grow with it.

San Clemente Garden Club's Garden Fest at the San Clemente Community Center, Avenida Del Mar and Seville, San Clemente; www.sanclementegardenclub.com. 8 a.m. Free. —BRANDON FERGUSON

[CONCERT]

Gift Rap

Lil Debbie

As a member of the White Girl Mob (with fellow Bay Area rappers Kreyayshawn and V-Nasty) since she was a teen, Lil Debbie was better known for her appearance on the group's 2011 mind-numbing hit "Gucci Gucci" than for her own skills behind the mic. Now excommunicated from the crew (creative differences), the pint-size rapper has found solo success with the help of another novelty musician in the form of RIFF RAFF. Her burgeoning career recently spawned two viral singles, "SQUIRT" and "2 Cups," and last October she released her first EP, *Queen D*. Just last month Lil Debbie unleashed her new mixtape, *California Sweetheart*. Love her or hate her, the Oakland native possesses the rare skill set that commands people's fascination while also forcing them to pay attention to her musical talents.

Lil Debbie with Okim, Growdy and Macho Negro at the Slidebar, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-2233; www.slidebarfullerton.com. 8 p.m. Free. 21+. —DANIEL KOHN

[THEATER]

* Join the Club

AN AFTERNOON WITH GROUCHO

Discerning folk love experiencing the greatness of iconic dead people, and while most choose old film or TV footage, there's always that slippery slope of live theater in which a performer attempts to resurrect someone so familiar to so many. It helps if the actor is also famous (Kathleen Turner as Tallulah Bankhead, Kate Mulgrew as Katharine Hepburn), but it's not essential. Frank Ferrante manages to slip into the Marx 'stache and tails effortlessly—in fact, what makes his Groucho even more enjoyable is that he creates new standup, channeling the brain of Groucho rather than merely rehashing his one-liners. Just remember to duck.

An Afternoon with Groucho at the Cerritos Center for the Performing Arts, 12700 Center Court Dr., Cerritos, (562) 916-8500; www.cerritoscenter.com. 3 p.m. \$20-\$45. —SR DAVIES



TOO HOT TO HANDLE

[THEATER]

* Surprise! It's All Pagan

SISTER'S EASTER CATECHISM: WILL MY BUNNY GO TO HEAVEN?

Everyone's favorite zombie holiday is upon us once again. But this year, instead of celebrating the risen holy dead by painting unfertilized chicken menstruations, why not head out for a night at the theater? The Laguna Playhouse hosts a topical treat with *Sister's Easter Catechism: Will My Bunny Go to Heaven?* Playhouse executive director Karen Wood and artistic director Ann Wareham bring back their best-loved character, the wise-cracking nun named Sister, a knowledgeable and religious lady who will answer all your plaguing Easter questions, such as "What the hell do rabbits have to do with eggs?" during her riotous comedic stage show.

Sister's Easter Catechism: Will My Bunny Go to Heaven? at the Laguna Playhouse, 606 Laguna Canyon Rd., Laguna Beach, (949) 497-2787; www.lagunaplayhouse.com. 7:30 p.m. \$35-\$55. —AMANDA PARSONS

[CONCERT]

Pure Gould

Ellie Goulding

While the mainstream music machine cranks out a new blow-up pop princess every 15 minutes (now with auto tune!), Ellie Goulding is like a messenger from above, sent to remind clubgoers and party people that there's still some original dance pop out there. Her vocal uniqueness, namely, is what sets Goulding apart from the herd—technically a soprano, she ranges from dreamy chirps to raspy, desperate wailing, all carried with a hardly contained surge of emotion. From career heights we could only dream of (triple-platinum certification and a personal invitation to sing at William and Kate's royal wedding reception), Goulding comes down from the heavens to play for us plebs. It would be a sin to miss it.

Ellie Goulding at the Fox Theater, 201 S. Garey Ave., Pomona, (877) 283-6976; www.foxpomona.com. 8 p.m. \$45-\$50. All ages. —ERIN DEWITT

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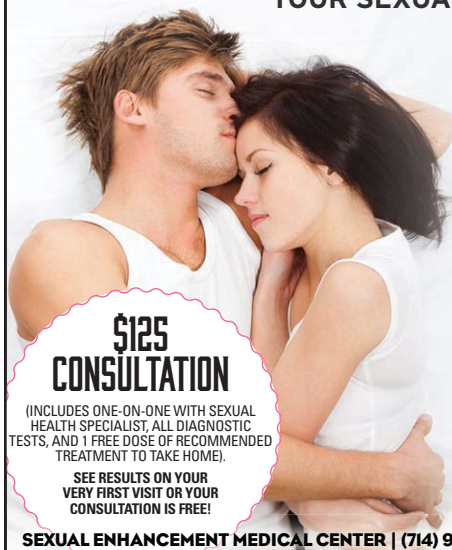


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wed/04/16

[FAMILY EVENT]



Fun Science

BUBBLEFEST XVIII

The Discovery Science Center's most "pop" ular annual event (ha!) comes back this spring to teach children about science under the guise of entertaining, hands-on activities and lively magic performances. For the fest's main event, the Mega Bubblefest Laser Show, join "bubble scientist" Deni Yang as he creates a plethora of effervescent floating spheres: bouncing bubbles, spinning bubbles, smoking bubbles, tiny bubbles inside large ones and more. After the show, let the kids run wild on the center's grounds for bubble-themed activity stations and DIY projects. It's like a science field trip in the middle of spring break—educational, hortative, there's even a little bath-time thrown in—and they'll never suspect a thing!

Bubblefest XVIII at the Discovery Science Center, 2500 N. Main St., Santa Ana, (714) 542-2823; www.discoverycube.org. 9 a.m. \$12.95-\$15.95; Mega Bubblefest Laser Show, \$5-\$7. All ages. —ERIN DEWITT

[CONCERT]

Get Back

Hard Day's Night

Every third Wednesday of the month, the Continental Room in Fullerton gets a serious case of Beatlemania. The dimly lit, intimate space presents Hard Day's Night, a Beatles tribute experience consisting of a pretty damn good re-creation of a Fab Four concert. First, we get a look back at the Beatles'

explosive "touring years" (1964-66), then a glimpse at the *Sgt. Pepper* and *Abbey Road* eras (1967-70), which were altogether

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some of the grooviest times in rock history. This tribute band has everything covered, from the perfectly groomed mop-tops to vintage guitars to British accents. It's kitschy, eccentric, nostalgic—and if you've caught the Continental's Elvis Show on the first Wednesday of the month, then you already know it can do one hell of a throwback.

Hard Day's Night at the Continental Room, 115 W. Santa Fe Ave., Fullerton, (714) 469-1879; www.continentalroomoc.com. 9 p.m. Free. 21+. —ERIN DEWITT



SINK INTO ATMOSPHERIC SLO-MO POP

thu/04/17

[COMEDY]

Jokes On Fire

Andrew Santino

Word of warning to the Irvine Improv's Thursday-night audience: If you're an attractive, single woman, do not sit in the front row. Andrew Santino, the ginger-haired comedian headlining tonight, might make you a cringe-worthy part of his standup act. (Check out some of his YouTube clips to see what we mean.)

But what we *do* like about this comedian/actor/producer is the way he's able to walk the razor-fine line between affable observation and asshole insult. Some of the shit he says should make his audience furious (or at least moderately offended), but it doesn't. Maybe that's because there's an easygoing tone in his delivery that reassures everyone it's all in good fun.

Andrew Santino at the Irvine Improv, 71 Fortune Dr., Irvine, (949) 854-5455; www.improv.com. 8 p.m. \$15. 18+. —ERIN DEWITT



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[CONCERT]



Into the Darkness

CROSSES

Deftones singer Chico Moreno's band Crosses (or ttt) isn't the "witch house" band the Internet thought they were—and did that genre ever really exist anyway? Instead, Moreno and band mates Shaun Lopez and Chuck Doom make densely atmospheric slow-mo pop songs that sound like a John Carpenter or David Lynch soundtrack somehow co-opted by Factory Records and possibly produced by Pink Floyd, depending on what song we're in the middle of. After much teasing with EPs, Crosses released their debut album just a few weeks ago, and it's a calculated and deliberate listen—the kind of thing that creeps in all around you like fog, then settles in for a long, dark night.

Crosses at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com. 8 p.m. \$25. All ages. —CHRIS ZIEGLER

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A Noodle by Any Other Name

Wei Shian Noodles serves fabulous Szechuan-style beef soup with—you guessed it!—noodles

BY EDWIN GOEI

If you happen to find yourself slurping braised beef noodle soup in Irvine, you're likely in a Taiwanese restaurant. The big names in town—A & J, Lao Dong, Chef Hung—are all Taiwanese. And each claim to serve the best bowl of niu rou mian, which is to Taiwan what pho is to Vietnam. It's a concoction that starts with a sugary, spice-laden dark beef broth capable of being a meal unto itself, poured over thick noodles and with plenty of the now-falling-apart chunks of meat to nibble between sips.

The dish is as nourishing as amniotic fluid, and seemingly a requirement on all restaurant menus at the 99 Ranch-anchored plaza on the corner of Walnut Street and Jeffrey Road in Irvine. You can get beef noodle soup even at 101 Noodle Express, which is actually a Shandong cuisine specialist. And now, a few doors down, where Liang's Kitchen used to simmer its own beef noodle soup, the new Wei Shian Noodles does fine bowls of its own.

You should know that Wei Shian is not Taiwanese either. The dead giveaway is that one of the three beef noodle soups offered here is labeled "hot spicy." And when you order it, you discover that the surface of the broth is covered in a layer of chile oil slick. The realization that Wei Shian is a Szechuanese joint comes about the same time you're dabbing your forehead of sweat and chugging your third glass of water to soothe your now-throbbing throat.

Even if you opt for the two other non-

spicy beef noodle soups—which start with the same anise-scented, clear base broth—you'll notice that most popular items here use prodigious amounts of chile oil. There's a pork dish constructed at the "cold table" of appetizers next to the register that finds strips of boiled pork belly doused in a mixture of that ambrosial chile oil. Bits of garlic and soy sauce make a dressing that magically cuts through the richness.

But perhaps the best Szechuan dish is the dan dan mian, a bowl of noodles served dry save for a drizzling of an oily paste made with pulverized chiles and peppers. You toss the noodles around the bowl to coat every strand with that flavorful muck until you end up

with what looks like a carbonara that went through the pits of hell. As you eat, your lips begin to numb, your eyes start to weep, but you're hooked. You can't stop devouring this nearly caustic and oily pasta, your tender insides be damned.

There are some dishes to avoid. The ma po tofu is rather unpleasant—throat-constricting for no good reason. And if you're considering a vegetable dish, you're better off with the sautéed green beans than the bok choy. The bok choy happens to be the mildest thing you can have at Wei Shian, but it's also the most boring. The green beans are, at least, oil-blanching to crinkle their skins, then tossed in a wok to absorb the flavors of rice wine, garlic and other aromatics. You should not, however, leave Wei

Shian without trying one of the pan-fried pie cakes. A pie cake is essentially an over-size pot sticker pressed flat on the griddle to a disk as big as a drink coaster and as thick as a hockey puck. Since the doughy dumpling skin is seared to a crispy golden brown on both sides, it looks more like Korean hotteok, something you order from a street vendor for breakfast or a snack. If they weren't so scalding hot and bursting juice and steam, you could conceivably eat the pie cakes with your hands. The best filling is a combination of chicken, pork and shrimp that springs back at you when your teeth breach the crispy outer cocoon. Actual dumplings in bite-size purses are also available either boiled or pan-fried with just the bottoms browned. But ordering them seems pointless after you've tried the pie cakes. And since an order of pie cake comes with four, and is enough for two meals, you needn't bother with any other dumpling dish.

Those who haven't figured out that Wei Shian is not Taiwanese by now will find out the minute they order the xiao long bao. These aren't the soup-filled dumplings Din Tai Fung calls xiao long bao, but rather actual steamed buns, with a fluffy bread surrounding a ground-pork filling similar to the one used for the pie cake. You get eight per order, each the size of a slider and just as filling. There's also a variant that's described as having a "Peking flavor." This one has the meat finely minced, then cooked loosely in a brown sauce with an alcoholic twang that's decidedly not Taiwanese. Ah, Irvine...

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Burrito Madness

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California is America's burrito empire, from the Mission cylindrical god of San Francisco to San Diego's California burrito to the Inland Empire's garbage burrito, which I described to a friend as "the Mission burrito without pretension" (try it at Rosa Maria's in San Bernardino—magnificent).

I was recently tasked with the most brutal assignment of my career: to take my life experience and boil it down to 30 choices. While my favorite burrito spot of all time is El Castillito off 17th and Mission streets in San Francisco, there are two OC restaurants worthy of mention: Athenian Burgers #3 for its epic breakfast burrito, and the multi-culti brilliance of Dos Chinos.

In doing research for this list, I was reintroduced to some of my favorite spots (Carnitas Los Reyes, Nate's Korner, Los Cotija's), realized some spots are all hype (Ham 'n Scram in Westminster? Pfft. Same goes for Bear Flag Fish Co., an excellent restaurant with a so-so burrito).

And I finally found an excuse to scope out Paul's Famous Burgers, which took over an old TK Burgers spot in Costa Mesa's Westside. It's one of my favorite genres of restaurant: the greasy spoon with an encyclopedic menu that spans Greek gyros, Japanese-American teriyaki, Mexican food and burgers. The crowd is purely working-class—Mexican immigrants, construction guys, men taking a break from their car or surf jobs over in the nearby industrial parks—with nary a hipster in sight. It's amazing it's taken this long to get such a place on West 19th Street.

The food at Paul's is fine save for those breakfast burritos. The Paul's burrito is a bit too heavy on the egg and light on the breakfast links, but the other breakfast burritos are wonderful—you can smack your burrito against a door and it'll open. Tortilla toasted perfectly, hash browns crispy, eggs whipped to a silky mass: They remind you why Orange County is so breakfast burrito-obsessed—did you know that they're unknown on the East Coast? Heathens!

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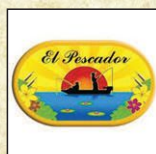
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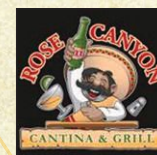
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NOT AFRAID



JENNIFER FEDRIZZI

Badass at the Bowers

Chris Brodeur of Tangata

Museum dining has a certain air about it. You're surrounded by works of art in a (mostly) serene environment. The food should be just as composed, or at least match the mood. At the Bowers Museum in Santa Ana, Chris Brodeur creates beauty in the kitchen.

OC WEEKLY: *Where does the restaurant's name come from?*

CHRIS BRODEUR: It means "mankind" in the New Zealand language of Maori. Culinarily speaking, Orange County has the best:

Indian food.

You have extensive experience working with Patina Group. What has working with them taught you?

I have learned so much working with this company, from food to administrative. I mostly elevated my culinary skills working with a lot of great chefs and people.

How does that differ from your time working in a hotel chain, or even a dining commons at Cal Poly Pomona?

Those places I worked for in the beginning taught me a lot of the basics and ins and outs of kitchen life.

You worked in Las Vegas for about a year.

Tell us about casino dining and its customers. Vegas was crazy busy at all times of the day and night. A 24-hour town means you're a 24-hour cook! Stories... what happens in Vegas, stays [in Vegas].

One food you can't live without:

Cheese! There are so many, and I want them all!

Weirdest thing you've ever eaten:

Chicken testicles fried in chile oil [Taiwanese-style].

ON THE LINE

» ANNE MARIE PANORINGAN

Favorite places to eat (besides your own):

Sushi Jen in downtown LA.

Where was your most recent meal?

Hot and sour Japanese ramen at Foo-Foo Tei in Hacienda Heights.

Did you drink a lot of beer when you worked for the Bottle Room in Whittier?

Yes, lots. I like IPAs.

What is your beverage of choice?

I really like Fentimans Dandelion & Burdock soda.

Most popular items on Tangata's menu:

The tuna melt and salmon Cobb salad.

Best culinary tip for the home cook:

Buy good knives and pans!

Favorite chef:

Marco Pierre White. He's a no-B.S. chef who trained all the chefs people are in love with these days.

You stated that brunch is your favorite meal, but what are you making for breakfast?

A fried egg, toast and coffee.

Favorite meal growing up:

Chunky-peanut-butter-and-boysenberry-jam sandwich with milk.

Weirdest customer request (and did you do it?):

[A customer] brought [his] own gluten-free bread and wanted our sandwich on it. Yes, we try to fulfill all requests the guests have, within reason.

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food»



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Fish everything at Tabi-Ji

When you sit at the Tabi-Ji sushi bar, prepare to be fed. This offshoot of Shiki—one of the oldest (if not *the* oldest and continuously running) Japanese restaurants in OC—is barely months old, but it already has regulars who know that they will get their money's worth in food when they come. One area with two teppanyaki islands is dedicated to the rap-a-tap-tap showmanship of two teppan chefs. Between the islands and the regular tables sits a sushi bar manned by four venerable-looking gents whose combined experience probably adds up to at least a century.

They make big, generous, honking sushi here. Where most salmon-skin rolls are anemic, Tabi-Ji's are overloaded, nigh pregnant, with more meat than skin—fat cylinders that we could hardly fit into our mouths. The uni is luscious and as sweet and creamy as custard. A special of conch

EAT THIS NOW

» EDWIN GOEI

sushi chews with a deliberate crunch. Then there's the mango roll: spicy tuna hugged with fistfuls of rice covered in salmon and formed into wheels gilded in sliced mango.

Had we known this was enough for a meal in and of itself, we wouldn't have ordered the hamachi kama (baked yellow-tail collar). But it's a good thing we did. We got the last one of the night and it was good. It's one of those foods that rewards those who are dexterous with chopsticks. Plus, there's no such thing as a bad time to have hamachi kama, especially if it's the last one.

TABI-JI

665 N. Tustin St., Orange, (714) 633-6000.

DRINK OF THE WEEK

» GUSTAVO ARELLANO

Vida at Anepalco's Cafe at the Ayres Hotel

Orange County's best restaurant just got better last month, as Anepalco's Cafe's Ayres Hotel location opened a full-fledged bar. Chef-owner Danny Godínez wanted cocktails to go with his magnificent creations but is asking for time, as his Peruvian barkeep is still working out the kinks on the drinks menu. Whatever! Anepalco's could serve a slab of drywall and the team here could somehow turn it into something better-tasting than the offerings at most OC eateries. The cocktails are already great, if leaning a bit too much to the brunch side of sweetness.

One drink, however, is already hinting at where Anepalco's wants its bar program to go. Just like the dishes that accompany it, the Vida is a masterpiece of mestizaje—and one hell of a punch.

THE DRINK

If you think Vida is just a slapdash cocktail because of its straightforward nature—Casa Noble blanco, Del Maguey mezcal, Dickel rye and Peychaud's bitters—then you're



ROSE-COLORED FIRE WATER

obviously not familiar with Godínez's sorcery, which takes the tried-and-true like chilaquiles and boosts them to extraordinary heights. And that's what happens with the Vida. The tricolor of tequila, mezcal and rye unite to form something that looks like an innocuous rosé but smashes like jungle juice; the bitters unite the squabbling liquors into a calming peace. It's the ultimate hombre drink, though, so only W.C. Fields-style drinkers should attempt it, as everyone else sits around in awe at Anepalco's anew.

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DIG THE GHOST
RIDER TATTOO



Descent of Man

Nicolas Cage's *Joe* lays bare a culture's collapse
BY AMY NICHOLSON

It's been 5 million years since humanity hauled itself from the swamp, and according to *Joe* director David Gordon Green, we're devolving back into the muck. While the stoners of Green's *Pineapple Express* regressed from men to boys after a few puffs of weed, this grimly beautiful drama starring Nicolas Cage makes mankind's progress feel even hazier and more hopeless, as though we may as well grab our weapons and retreat to our caves.

The setting is rural Texas, that stretch where there's nothing but scrub brush and wasted space. The resources that matter—money and respect—are so scarce that men fight one another for a larger share. (Women, at least, are plentiful. This hard land has ground down their hope, making them desperate and cheap.) For extra gloom, the film tosses in frequent thunderstorms, yet none of the characters has the foresight to own an umbrella. However, most do own attack dogs that function as snarling, snapping extensions of their own fear. One of Green's wry running jokes is that every home visit starts with an apology for the growls.

Cage plays Joe, an ordinary name for an ordinary-looking man who becomes

more complex with every scene. He's the boss of a small-time unit hired to poison the trees on a land baron's acreage—in a cynical loophole, the lumber company isn't allowed to cut down the trees unless they're already dying. Justifies Joe, "They're weak, not good for anything."

It's a metaphorical job, the sort Samuel Beckett might have dreamed up for the stage, but to Joe and his half-dozen men, it's an honest living. When they drive into town for hookers and beer, at least they know they came by their cash squarely. There are some men there who don't, such as the drunk (Gary Poulter) who steals from his hard-working 15-year-old son, Gary (Tye Sheridan of *Tree of Life*), which is the sort of dour business that Joe's content to ignore as long as he can, even though the boy's one of his best employees. When Joe stops ignoring things, he gets into too much trouble.

Lots of movies have characters like Joe, guys with a shady past and a skewed moral code. Cage has played several himself. A more conventional actor would make him a hardass who never lets down his guard. Cage makes him compelling. You might expect Cage to break out his patented strange, to do that Cage thing

filmmakers have been hiring him for as though their greatest goal is a couple of viral GIFs. He's been in on the joke, signing onto movies he must know are worthless, and then simply amusing himself. But *Joe* is Cage's periodic reminder that he's one of his generation's great talents. Perhaps he's reminding himself.

Here, Cage feels rooted to the ground. His pecs are bigger, his footfalls feel heavier, his smile, rare as it is, feels real. He delivers great lines without leaning on a lunatic leer, and every time you expect him to explode, he keeps the per-

Joe is Cage's periodic reminder that he's one of his generation's great talents. Perhaps he's reminding himself.

formance in check. Which means when Joe does do crazy things, such as grab a cottonmouth snake, try to outrun a cop or make an angry five-minute pit stop at a whorehouse, we're genuinely unnerved.

As in *Leaving Las Vegas*, the role that won him an Oscar, Cage is again playing an alcoholic. Joe's drinking, as well as everyone else's in town, goes unacknowledged. Again and again, these hair-trigger, pride-hungry men collide without the safety of sober self-control. In one fight, Joe screams at the bartender to call the cops, but it's to protect the other guy from himself.

Perhaps Joe suspects he's surpassed his life expectancy, which, in caveman

years, he has. When the girl he's sleeping with asks if they have a future, he sighs, "I like you, too, but what's the point of it." He's more interested in seeding his wisdom in teenage Gary, so that the next generation will know how to be a man. One lesson is that women love fancy lighters. Another comes in a soliloquy about grit and survival. "Every day they hurt," says Joe of the workers he employs. "There's no frontier anymore."

Joe is a miserably perfect portrait of a culture on the brink of collapse. Green found his supporting cast on the street, a stunt justified by the fact they can actually act. Joe's laborers are actual laborers, and his second-in-command, the wonderfully mush-mouthed Brian Mays, was found at a barbecue restaurant. The wild-haired Poulter, making a phenomenal debut as Gary's abusive drifter dad, was a homeless man Green's casting director discovered at an Austin bus stop. He's fantastic. If only Poulter had lived long enough to hear it—he drowned in a river two months after the film wrapped.

On camera, Poulter is one of the villains of the film. In life, as well as in death, he's its conscience. Green and Cage capture the self-inflicted hardships of these suffering men. By his own example, Poulter makes us care.

JOE

was directed by David Gordon Green; written by Gary Hawkins, based on the novel by Larry Brown; and stars Nicolas Cage, Tye Sheridan, Gary Poulter, Ronnie Gene Blevins and Brian Mays. Rated R.

OPENING

JOE See "Descent of Man," page 29.

OCULUS A cleverly executed mind game that generates scares via structural ingenuity, *Oculus* suggests a world coming terrifyingly unmoored from its bearings. Set in two separate time periods, director Mike Flanagan's debut boasts sumptuously sweeping, rotating camerawork and a knotty script. It concerns the attempt by Kaylie and younger brother Tim (Karen Gillan and Brenton Thwaites as adults; Annalise Basso and Garrett Ryan as kids) to return to their old home and destroy an ancient mirror that, Kaylie claims, houses a supernatural spirit who was responsible for the deaths of their

parents (Rory Cochrane and Katee Sackhoff) 11 years earlier. Having been rehabilitated in a mental hospital to forget what really happened, the brainwashed Tim is skeptical of Kaylie's theory, and the possibility that Kaylie is delusional is stoked throughout by Flanagan's segueing between the past and present, hallucinations and reality. As this flip-flopping becomes more pronounced, *Oculus* becomes a swirl of nightmarish confusion in which the unreliability of perception leads characters into danger—and keeps the action's suspense potent. Replete with superb performances led by a paranoid Sackhoff and unhinged Cochrane, it's the rare horror film to know how to tease malevolent mysteries and deliver

satisfyingly unexpected, unsettling pay-offs. **(R)** Nick Schager. *Countywide*.

ONGOING

BAD WORDS As you can guess, Jason Bateman's directorial debut *Bad Words* is filled with bad words: Bateman plays Guy Tribby, an alleged grown-up with a photographic memory and a lousy attitude who bullies his way into a national spelling bee competition for grade-schoolers. As he's knocking 'em dead on the spelling-bee circuit, executing words like *floccinaucinihilipilification* with aplomb, he's also spraying his ill will and nasty vocabulary every which way like a surly tomatcat. No one escapes his acid verbal jet-stream: Not

Allison Janney's prim-and-proper bee coordinator, nor Kathryn Hahn as the journalist who, for no clear reason, has chosen to accompany him on this bitter adventure. *Bad Words* might have been moderately enjoyable if Tilly was just a really bad guy. But there's a reason for his miserable behavior—in case you haven't guessed, this is a journey toward redemption. Bateman, as both director and star, digs his heels in too hard to make the movie's points, using lots of ho-hum close-ups and wriggly camera work along the way. The foul-mouthed insults that litter Andrew Dodge's screenplay aren't even that clever: At one point Tilly, who has reluctantly accepted the friendship of an adorable bee competitor of South Asian descent

(played, winsomely, by Rohan Chand), asks the kid if he has a girlfriend: "You can't find one little chicken tikka to get your shrimp tandoori up in?" If that's supposed to be shocking, it isn't—but it isn't funny, either. Bateman seems to be looking over his shoulder to make sure we're getting the gags, but all he's come up with is a *Bad Santa* wannabe, with none of that movie's glorious Rabelaisian spirit. How do you spell *relief*? **(R)**
Stephanie Zacharek. *Countdown*.

CAPTAIN AMERICA: THE WINTER

SOLDIER Tucked into a pocket of his workout sweats, Steve Rogers—aka Captain America, the serum-enhanced Yankee Doodle Dynamo who's spent six decades in deep freeze—keeps a notebook of cultural beats he's missed: *Star Wars*, Marvin Gaye, Thai food. If only he'd added '70s conspiracy thrillers to his list. First, so he could tell his boss' boss, Alexander Pierce (Robert Redford), "Hey, anyone ever tell you you look like that guy from *Three Days of the Whatchamacalit?*" And second, so he'd realize sooner that he's been plunged into one. Under the watch of S.H.I.E.L.D., the government agency at which he reservedly works, the planet's nearly been destroyed six times in four years. No wonder bigwig Nick Fury (Samuel L. Jackson) is rushing the launch of three massive drones programmed to neutralize threats before they attack. Fury warns that the 21st century's battle lines are no longer as obvious as WWII's. Cap's either with S.H.I.E.L.D. or against it, and soon, some of S.H.I.E.L.D. decides its against him. The script is solid, and the fight scenes are excellent. *The Winter Soldier* is the first Marvel film in forever that doesn't climax with heroes mowing down a horde of non-human nobodies. This is bone on bone on that vibranium shield, which thwangs satisfyingly as it ricochets around before conking a villain—Cap's like a pool shark plunking the eight-ball. Meanwhile, Scarlett Johansson's Black Widow seduces him, only half-successfully, to join the modern age. Marvel doesn't consider her important or male enough to earn a love interest herself, but even if she never gets to have any sex, the camera certainly makes love to her. **(PG-13)** Amy Nicholson. *Countwide*.

DIVERGENT Neil Burger's *Divergent* is constructed around a narrative premise so illogical it makes Keanu Reeves being the Chosen One feel as earthbound a notion as saying water is wet. In a future Chicago, the last civilization standing, the citizenry is so organized that they've divided themselves into five factions and built an electrical Great Wall, yet no one can be bothered to fix the broken windows. Those factions are the pillars upon which our plot rests—or flails. Teenagers test their aptitudes for each powerful clan, such as the Dauntless, brave fighters in black, or the Abnegation, selfless, gray-clad civil servants. The story insists that all of mankind falls neatly into just one of these broad categories. It'd be easier to root for lead Tris' (Shailene Woodley, the go-to girl for drab roles with grit) quest to escape her Abnegation roots to prove herself a worthy Dauntless if director Burger felt committed to the concept. But the five clans act near-indistinguishably from each other, and when Tris stumbles in an endless training sequence, her instructor yells, "I thought you were smart!" Smart? But how? Actually, Tris can be smart and brave—she's secretly tested as Divergent, the rare person who can be smart, brave, happy, and honest. Which means she must be killed. Explains evil Jeanine (Kate Winslet), people who break the rules by being smart, brave, etc., start wars. You might as well blame violence on lapsed calendars. But this is just another lap in logic from a film

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where a fellow undercover Divergent who lives in public dorms reveals that he's tattooed his divergency on his spine. Can we disqualify him from being one of the smarties? (PG-13) Amy Nicholson. *Countywide.*

MUPPETS MOST WANTED On the patented Acme Silliness Scale, which peaks at 11.5, 2011's *The Muppets* was about an 8. But the new *Muppets Most Wanted*, in which an evil Kermit look-alike named Constantine escapes from a Siberian prison to wreak havoc, registers closer to a 9.5. In other words, it's better. At the start, the Muppets realize their recent movie hasn't made them as hot as they'd hoped. An oily Hollywood type preys on their vulnerability and persuades them to hire him as their manager. Little do they know that the man who has identified himself as Dominic Badguy (Ricky Gervais) is really a scheming jewel thief. Dominic arranges a European tour for the Muppets and immediately dispatches Kermit; the other Muppets don't know that their trustworthiness has been replaced by prison-escapee Constantine, Dominic's partner in crime, who looks just like Kermit save for a Cindy Crawford mole on his upper lip. Meanwhile, Kermit is

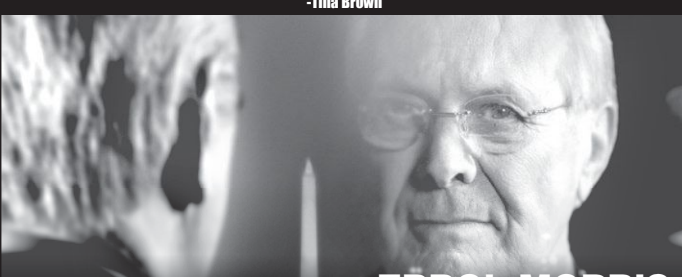
whisked off to the gulag, where prison mistress Nadya (Tina Fey, looking quite fetching in a fitted Russian officer's coat and matching fur hat) tries to have her way with him. Her PG-rated way, of course. The story matters only in that it creates opportunities for heaps of ridiculousness, and writer/director James Bobin (who also directed *The Muppets*), along with co-writer Nicholas Stoller, mines them skillfully and breezily. You haven't lived until you've seen grizzled Siberian jailbirds, played by Jemaine Clement (*Flight of the Conchords*), Ray Liotta, and Danny Trejo, singing the living daylights out of Hamlisch and Kleban, and Fey slinks through several musical numbers with vixen-like ersatz Russian charm. (PG) Stephanie Zacharek. *Countywide.*

NOAH To hear Darren Aronofsky tell it in interviews, there was no way in hell he'd let his special-effects extravaganza *Noah*, years in the planning, be your run-of-the-mill, candy-ass Biblical epic. The ark built by Russell Crowe's Noah couldn't be some SS Minnow-style thing with a cute little peaked-roof house at the top: It had to be a majestically ugly barge, the better to fit thousands of CGI two-by-two beasts. Instead of trying to

wring some drama out of that hoary old contretemps between Noah and God, Aronofsky took a minor Old Testament figure, Tubal-cain, and hired Ray Winstone to play him. This re-imagined Tubal-cain is a tough who murdered Noah's father long ago; now he wants to elbow his way onto the ark, and possibly—shudder—eat some of the animals. Also, Aronofsky has introduced a group of fallen angels known as the Watchers, a race of crabby rock people who have become disgusted with the mess mankind has made and who never got over being defeated by Flash Gordon. OK, Flash Gordon isn't in *Genesis*, but that was probably just an oversight. *Noah* is here not to set the record straight, but to set it on its head. This isn't a lavish work of mad genius, it's designed to be a lavish work of mad genius, and there's a difference. Aronofsky is an uncompromising director: He wants everything just so, and he knows what he's doing, to the extent that audiences always do, too—you can feel the gears behind it all noisily grinding. If *Noah*, his costliest and splashiest film, has any splendor at all, it's the business-as-usual CGI spectacle kind. (PG-13) Stephanie Zacharek. *Countywide.*

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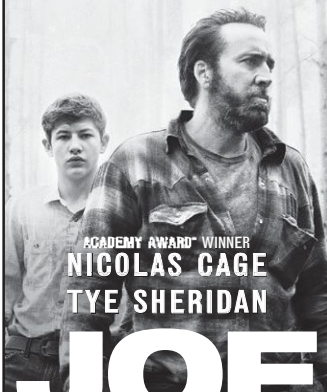
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Dreams of War

Dana Harel's ex•pose show at Laguna Art Museum is a dreamy take on the horrors of combat

BY DAVE BARTON

War is hell, but you wouldn't know that on a visit to Laguna Art Museum's latest ex•pose show, featuring the anti-war graphite and paper drawings of artist Dana Harel. "Between Dreams and Nightmares" features little we can instantly chalk up to military aggression—no flags, tanks, guns, mass graves. It's curator Grace Kook-Anderson's thorough notes and program that put everything into perspective: The blank-faced subjects on display are a dreamscape of the walking wounded, often with animal familiars, poised, fading away, half-erased like an old Xerox left in the sun.

Daughter of a soldier, wife to a soldier and a soldier herself, Harel has been surrounded by the male experience of war and says, in an accompanying interview, that she experienced things in the military she's only just been able to process. That internal struggle, largely silent, grasping and stubborn, is not unlike the central image of her show: a naked man embracing an armful of feathers.

Based on the Biblical story of Jacob wrestling with an angel (or God, depending on the version you read), Jacob kept fighting until his aggressor had blessed him, even after he'd been wounded. In Harel's *Wrestling God*, Jacob's face touches the now-fading face of the other as if kissing him, their heads surrounded by darkness, the lower half of the angel (and Jacob's victory) literally slipping through his fingers as a blast of light threatens to take over the picture. The artist has added dirt to the drawing, "grounding" the fantastic in reality and further recalling the Biblical idea of man as a creation from the dust of the earth.

Equally strong is *When I'm Gone*, the faint touch of gold on the buttons or epaulets worn by a man on horseback the only thing that overtly offers a suggestion of the military. As with Lot's wife, he's looking back at an unseen devastation he has escaped (or been part of), white, still, frozen in time, left hand open, weaponless and poised as a mannequin's. His out-of-proportion horse, with its massive head and dead eyes, gallops into an unseen oblivion.

The rest of her images aren't as powerful, but several are memorable in the way they suggest vestigial psychic and physical damage: *Not Telling Them Apart Until the Very End 1 & 2* features a figure in profile, hiding behind a handful of dead branches; the second more defiantly looks at the viewer, freshly picked flowers in hand. *I Know Something of Steep Places 3, 2 & 1* are heads devoid of bodies, like clay puppets from antiquity. Eyes closed, faces in repose, death masks resting on cobblestones... or victims of war whose heads have been stuck on pikes?

In *No Longer Hidden*, leafy vegetation sprouts from a helmet or skull or skull in a



helmet—it's unclear—suggesting the earth is giving up its dead. *Gate Keeper 1* wears a victor's laurel wreath on his head, but Harel deliberately leaves portions of his body (and the chair he's sitting on) missing, suggesting he's left a good portion of himself on the battlefield and can be toppled with a slight push.

Gate Keeper 2 is also perilous in body and throne, but he's holding a hyena in his lap, the two faces not all that remarkably different from each other. Modeled in clay, and then drawn, Harel's intentionally crude sculptures—we see the impressions of her fingers on the faces of her subjects—also have religious possibilities: Could the head-long drive to war be something built into her subjects by their creator (Harel or God)?

That rough, dysmorphic physiognomy coincides with the Lynchian-bad-dream aspect of the show—and makes for a discomforted viewing. The images aren't attractive; they're sinister and sad, intentionally so—that change in aesthetics a direct (and very successful) contrast to the delicacy of detail in her previous work.

Where she goes wrong is in a way I find common among many women artists: Their

work is too outwardly focused on the men in their lives or as a reaction to the men in their lives. Harel may say the works in the exhibition are about internal struggle—and many of her images suggest there's some dark dreams inside her—but her reliance on a specific gender as particularly atavistic, even if it's true, deflects her own participation in the war effort. I would also argue that by avoiding the obvious political influences behind war—racism, exploitation, religious hatred and greed are all absent here—Harel is talking *around* the subject instead of directly *to* it.

If she were to personalize things, moving it closer to her experience than to the outside influence of men, making it about the airing of her own dirty laundry, the resulting work would provide a useful insight into women warriors (and women peacemakers), something deeper, richer and far more radical than what's on display here.

EX•POSE: DANA HAREL

at Laguna Art Museum, 307 Cliff Dr., Laguna Beach, (949) 494-8971; lagunaartmuseum.org.

Open Fri.-Tues., 11 a.m.-5 p.m.; Thurs., 11 a.m.-9 p.m. \$5-\$7.

TRENDZILLA

» LP HASTINGS

Buy a Shirt, Help a Vet

Downtown Huntington Beach isn't all bros and riots—the blog Main & PCH focuses on the positive in Surf City. Founding editor Lauren Lloyd covers the food, lifestyle and creative makers of the city's downtown and Huntington Beach in general. But this past month, Main & PCH went beyond promotional reporting and sunny photographs by pairing up with some of the most badass dudes in town: the men behind Honorable Recharge.

It's a new nonprofit with a mission to build camaraderie and a safe haven for veterans while teaching outsiders that PTSD does not make someone a crazy person. The group, most of whom live in the beachside city, is still small, but it has already raised money for veterans during this year's Musink.

The two groups met when Main & PCH thought up the "Interpretation Tee." It wanted to call on a local artist to redesign its logo for a T-shirt, then give money from the sale of the first 50 to the artist's charity of choice. Hek from the Tattoo Gallery was the blog's first choice. "Hek has a big heart and a big following, and we love his work," Lloyd says. "He is constantly lending his creative chops to charitable causes, so we figured he'd be stoked to join forces with us."

Hek frequently works with Johnny's Saloon, the punk-rock bar where veterans are famously treated like kings, making Honorable Recharge his obvious choice. "Huntington Beach is home to more than 12,500 veterans," Lloyd notes. "Most neighboring cities house less than half of that amount." Lloyd mentions that both of her grandfathers were veterans, "so the cause hits home."

"I've never seen [any city] as active in helping to give back to veterans as HB," adds Robbie Clarke, a founder of Honorable Recharge. He promises that all of the funds from the T-shirt sale will go toward promotional items such as pamphlets, posters and shirts, which will hopefully alert more veterans to the group.

Buy Hek's special design at mainandpch.com, with free shipping through April. Then go buy yourself a drink at Johnny's. Hell, if you wear the shirt, someone else might buy you a drink, too!

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IF IT'S ROCKING,
DON'T COME KNOCKING

MIKE CARANO

Hot and Heavy

Five songs to make out in your car to,
according to Ralphie May

BY ALI LERMAN

Ralphie May is a favorite of ours, and since we already know so much about one of comedy's hottest big men, we wanted to get his take on something a little more personal—a little advice, if you will. He has a hilarious bit in his set that talks about a certain song, along with a side of “digital penetration” while in the car. So we thought we’d take it a bit further because we figured there had to be a few more songs that would be appropriate to make some sweet love to while in your vehicle. Sit back and enjoy May’s picks, and next time you head out with your love, feel free to pull off the road and use these jams at your discretion.

5. QUEEN, “BOHEMIAN RHAPSODY”

You gotta go “Bohemian Rhapsody” by Queen because of the sheer length of the song, you know what I mean? There [are] so many dramatic places in this song, and everybody knows the words, so you can change the rhythms at any time. You can kind of synchronize it, so it’d be really good.

4. LED ZEPPELIN, “STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN”

In the immortal words of *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, chicks dig Led Zeppelin. You gotta go “Stairway to Heaven” here because if you’re gonna finger bang, let’s get it on! I don’t even know what the fuck a hedgerow is, but I know I want one!

3. THE OUTFIELD, “YOUR LOVE”

I lean to the ’80s because that’s when I was making out in my car, so “Your Love” is great: “Josie’s on a vacation far away/ Come around and talk it over”! That’s a classic song. It’s a weird song because he’s saying how he needs your love tonight, even though he likes his girls a little bit older. It’s a crazy thing when you think about it because it’s like he’s saying, “You’re too young and hot, and that pussy

is too tight. Normally, I like it a little more beat the fuck up.” [Laughs.] At the end of the night, he’s drawing that distinction and saying, “Hey, I like you the way you are in direct opposition to what society says we should like,” so I guess it’s kind of a nice thing. And what guy doesn’t want to use your love? “I’m trying to get my dick in there and rub it around until I come!” It’s like, how can you not want to do that?

2. BON JOVI, “LIVIN’ ON A PRAYER”

Oh, man, you have to go “Livin’ On a Prayer”! You have to! I mean, it was 28 weeks at No. 1, and even black people know that song! I mean, Ghostface Killah told me he knows that song! That’s how strong this song is! It would be fucking amazing to see him do karaoke to this song—that actually might be a new thing for me.

1. JOURNEY, “DON’T STOP BELIEVIN’”

You have to have Journey because more chicks have come to Journey than they have with vibrators. [Laughs.] That’s just the truth! Journey is the pinnacle—but which song do you pick? Everybody goes “Don’t Stop,” but then there is “Faithfully,” with “Highway run, into the midnight sun,” and that’s a good one for me because I’m on the fucking road all of the time. I think if you’re going to go to the top, though, you have to go with “Don’t Stop Believin’.” Any Journey song will do in a pinch, though, trust me. It works! Oh, my god, if you have the whole album in the car? You’re pulling over and fucking! If you can go for a long time, you might want to pick up the greatest hits!

Check upcoming dates for Ralphie May’s *Filthy Animal Tour* on his website, www.RalphieMay.com, and follow him on Twitter: @Ralphie_May.



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Sister Act

The acclaim of Haim culminates at Coachella

BY TESSA STUART

The day after headlining Webster Hall in New York, the Haim sisters hoist their equipment out of a black van and lug it across a sidewalk to the entrance of WNYC, which is kind of the Big Apple's version of KCRW. Alana, 22; Danielle, 24; and Este, 28—all in matching black motorcycle boots—are double-booked this afternoon, with back-to-back performances and interviews on two different programs.

At this point, they are used to being in demand. It took the band five years to finish their debut album, mainly because the Haims kept getting invited on tours they couldn't turn down: Vampire Weekend, Rihanna, Florence and the Machine, Mumford & Sons, and Phoenix. And they still had to decline some offers, such as when A\$AP Rocky asked them to be his backing band.

On the strength of their debut, *Days Are Gone*, released last September, Haim booked slots at both Glastonbury and Bonnaroo and won praise from everyone from Katy Perry to *The New Yorker's* Sasha Frere-Jones. This year, the band have taken some significant steps up the food chain, being tapped to perform dual Friday slots at Coachella this year.

New York City, of course, is a long way from Valley Village, the tiny San Fernando Valley town they grew up in, but there is something about the way they carry their instruments up to the seventh-floor studio that makes them look, even in their badass boots and leather jackets, like the kid musicians they used to be.

They were always a close-knit trio. Their parents used to leave Este in charge of Danielle and Alana, with

orders to practice the classic-rock covers they played for their family band, Rockin' Haim. In addition to Danielle on guitar and Este on bass, that group also featured Dad on drums, Mom on lead vocals, and Alana, age 4, on the cow bell. They played their first show at Canter's Deli on Fairfax, before graduating to gigs at religious festivals and county fairs.

Seven years ago, when Alana was finally in high school, the three of them began playing shows as Haim. Critics have struggled to describe the band's sound, often falling back on weak comparisons to Fleetwood Mac, and that's partly because they draw from such a wide landscape. *Days Are Gone* is like a found poem of LA radio sounds, with smooth R&B vocals, blistering classic-rock guitar riffs, and punchy '80s pop drumbeats. "People ask us, 'What did you grow up listening to?' and we're, like, 'Just LA radio,'" Danielle says.

Seriously, though. "People don't get how dope it is," Alana adds. They cite KRTX 101, first and foremost, but they also love KIIS. "My dream is to meet Rick Dees," Alana says. "And sing 'Disco Duck' with him?" Este asks.

They harmonize: "Discooooo, disco duck."

If you watch YouTube videos of Haim at South By Southwest last year, it's striking how much they've grown as a band since then—they were wilder, noisier and rougher around the edges in those performances. But it's even more striking how close those songs are to the cuts that appear on the finished album.

"The Wire," the single they released last summer, is a good example of how

the album grew up with them. Originally written in 2008, the sisters rerecorded it every year, sometimes three times a year, until they got it right.

When it came out, "The Wire" exploded online, raising *Days Are Gone's* buzz. Not that they've had time to notice.

"Did it explode?" Alana asks, genuinely surprised. In fact, the success of that single helped the band sell out Webster Hall the night before.

It's clear when they take the stage—even a small, studio stage such as the one at WNYC—that those days are gone. Any trace of naivete evaporates as they launch into a searing rendition of "Falling."

Onstage, the soft-spoken middle sister, Danielle—who tends to hang back in interviews, ceding the floor to her sisters—commands the spotlight. But they perform as a unit, lost in a kind of hypnotizing psychic sync.

Looking on from backstage is their entourage, old Rockin' Haim band mates Mama and Papa Haim. While the band performs, their mother whips out a bejeweled phone and flips through pictures of the previous night's show, pausing on one of their father in front of Webster Hall, beaming proudly, pointing at their name up on the marquee.

HAIM

perform with the Shy Girls at the Fox Theater Pomona, 301 S. Garey Ave., Pomona, (909) 784-3677; www.foxpomona.com. Wed., 8 p.m. \$27.50-\$35 in advance; \$30-\$35 at the door. All ages. For more info on Haim, visit www.haimtheband.com.

TRUE STORY

» JACK GRISHAM

The New Jesus

"I need 10,000 words on this new Jesus. Can you do it?"

I stared at him. He was overweight, unqualified and a total cunt.

"You want 10?" I asked. "I'll give you a million, you fat fuck."

"Perfect." He handed me an address and a time. "Go here, talk to the master, and write it up. They say he's the second coming of Christ. I say he's full of shit."

The address I was given was straight-up downtown, a shit-hole apartment building housing derelicts and Section 8s. The Lord Our God was three flights up. I climbed the stairs and knocked on the door.

"Hey, Jesus! Open up."

I was let in by a prostitute. I knew her—Reckless Mary worked the bars on Oliver Street. I brushed her ass as I walked in. She pushed back against my hand.

"Is that what you're looking for baby?" she asked. "You come up here for ass?"

She was hot, I'll give her that, but I was short on condoms and pressed for time. "No, baby, I'm . . ."

"Looking for me?"

It was the new Jesus. He was maybe 5-foot-2, if he lost the sandals, and he was a flabby 300 pounds, with red hair, freckles and a pair of ears on him that made him look like a clown.

"You gotta be fucking kidding me," I said.

"Why, because I look like this?" He rubbed his belly. "I made a mistake last time—I was too comely. The message was lost under that dashing romantic figure—slim and handsome, blond. You painted me, nailed to the cross." He farted. A foul odor filled the room. "Oh, no, there won't be any of that loving martyr business going down here. This is the new and improved Jesus."

I took in the vibe of the apartment: The couch I was sitting on was more dog bed than settee, the few chairs were made of chipped Walmart wood, the carpet torn, stained and worn, and Mary standing in the kitchen, rubbing her itchy crotch while she sucked religiously on a glass pipe. It was trash.

"Yes, you look new and improved—a short, fat bozo living in squalor with a prostitute and a plan. Lose the belly," I said, "and it reads just like the old God."

"Yes," he said, "I could see how you'd think that, but I was waiting for you—it's no good to do a miracle if it can't be seen. You humans need proof, and even then you argue about what you thought you saw. I'm going to use you. We're going to start with this"—he made a grand sweep of his hand—"and then, I'll give you this."

Mary fell to her knees. The pipe dropped from her hand. She was choking, unable to breathe; her jaundiced skin faded to an almost green. She reached out for Jesus.

"Fuck you," he said. "You're a drug addict and a whore; you deserve to die."

She stopped breathing.

Jack Grisham is an author, hypnotherapist, T.S.O.L. front man and all-around troublemaker. This column may or may not be factual, with characters who may or may not be real.

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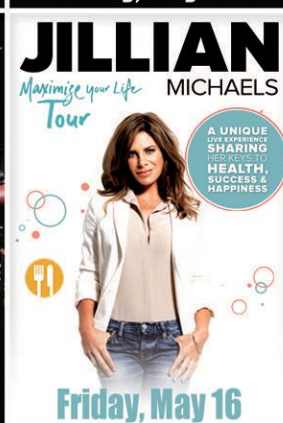
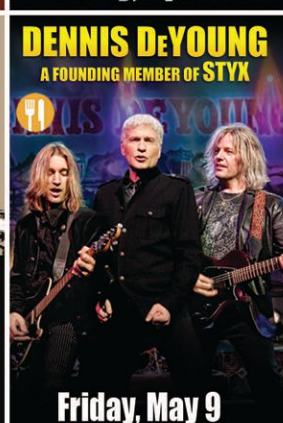
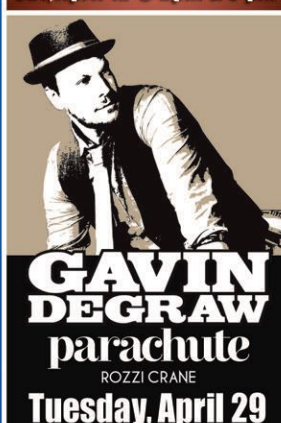
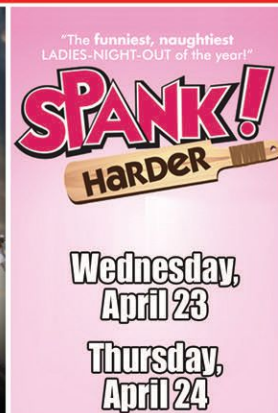
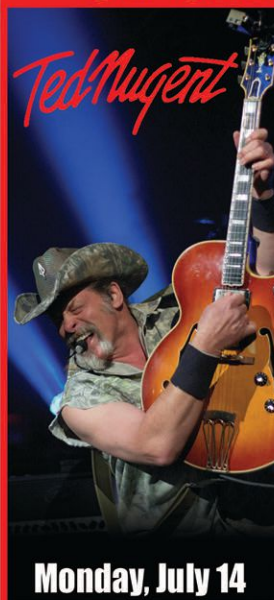
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Day Party In the Desert

Johnny Shockey's LED partners with Goldenvoice to bring a new era of EDM to Indio

BY ALEJANDRA LOERA

For four years, Voyer in San Diego was the hot spot for the most respectable EDM DJs and the dance floor for breaking new talent in all genres of electronic music. For Johnny Shockey, that nightclub was only the beginning for his company, My Life Every Day (a.k.a. LED). It went from throwing nightclub shows, day parties and festivals at Petco Park to creating a partnership with mega-promoter Goldenvoice. This weekend, LED makes its debut in the desert with an LED Day Club at the Hard Rock Hotel in Palm Springs, hosting the official Coachella pool parties running both weekends of the festival.

For the wild, bass-addicted crowds of the Coachella Sahara and Yuma tents, this is the perfect weekend topper as far as partying the weekend away goes. Especially in a scene in which going from day parties to nightclubs that go until dawn is just a part of everyday life—well, at least at music festivals. With artists as diverse as David Guetta and Skrillex, the turnout is bound to garner the kind of attendance Las Vegas pool parties would die for on a weekly basis.

The Canadian-born Shockey came to the States at 17 to play professional hockey. Later, one of the guys he played for approached him about opening a restaurant and bar in San Diego, but Shockey knew music and clubs were more his forte. The result was Voyer, a very successful club that focused on electronic music. “Tyson [Ziebarth], my partner, came up with the concept behind My Life Every Day,” Shockey says. “It started as a lifestyle brand based on how we were living our lives, and now moving forward, this whole wave of dance music has taken over.”

With the growing number of revelers in need of a fix, LED saw an opportunity. The company programmed and produced eight events, which turned into the whole summer at the Wavehouse the year after. Then Live Nation, who was looking to tap the EDM market, came to LED to partner on Identity Festival in San Diego—the first touring dance-music festival, featuring Kaskadee, Afrojack and Steve Aoki. “That was the start of something major,” Shockey says. “We were already doing successful events on a weekly basis and realized that doing something bigger wasn’t that much more difficult.”

Today, LED produces more than 300 events per year at places such as Fluxx in San Diego, the Fox Theater Pomona, Sound in Hollywood and the Shrine Auditorium in LA, as well as its own

A MODEL CEO



JEFF CORRIGAN

event brands, including My Life Every Day USA; Tramps Like Us; OMFG! NYE; and, most recently, a three-city takeover of President’s Day Weekend in San Francisco, Los Angeles and San Diego, with Finger Lickin’ and LED Anniversary. “I think in EDM, people are very brand-aware. Their social circles and rave families love concepts and new exciting experiences, which is the lifestyle that LED represents,” says Shockey.

Whether it’s all in one city or across three cities, LED continues to grow its brand, becoming well-known for kick-ass parties. The company’s partnership with Goldenvoice means bigger venues, more money for talent, and a poolside Day Club featuring Dirty South, A-Trak, Disclosure, David Guetta, Skrillex, Martin Garrix, Tiesto and Showtek in Palm Springs for the next two weekends.

Not bad for a former professional hockey player. In fact, it’s his hockey days that brought Shockey to do events at the San Diego Sports Arena. “They used to produce our hockey games, and now they’re helping me produce our dance-music events,” says Shockey. “It’s fun to make that transition and still work with familiar faces.”

And there are more transformations ahead, including LED throwing huge festivals similar to HARD Summer in LA in the near future. “I actually talked to Gary [HARD’s founder] this morning,” says Johnny. “It’s good when you can look across the board and everyone is doing well. It’s great for the industry.”

LED DAY CLUB

at the Hard Rock Hotel Palm Springs, 150 S. Indian Canyon Dr., Palm Springs; leddayclub.com. Thurs.-Sun., April 10-13 & April 17-20, 11 a.m. \$40-\$200. 21+.

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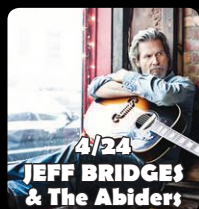
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4/26 QUEEN NATION

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5/1 SIMON

TOWNSHEND

5/2 SUPER DIAMOND

5/3 AL STEWART /

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5/8 ROGER CLYNE AND

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5/9 Y&T

5/10 OC'S FUNNIEST

HOUSEWIVES

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(THE NEW THIN LIZZY)

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5/22 CANNED HEAT

5/23 MELVIN SEALS &

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5/24



5/29

SEA WOLF



5/30

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6/15 ROD PIAZZA

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7/5 THE PETTY

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7/20 THE WAILERS

7/26 BEATLES vs STONES

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It's hard to believe that a music venue with an 850-person capacity, a full bar and a stage catering to local talent has the ability to fly under the radar in our little music scene. But since it opened quietly late last year, Diego's has done just that. It sits adjacent to the Yost Theater in downtown Santa Ana. Just past the giant "D" logo painted on the outside wall, the club looks the way any quiet, minimalist hipster bar in Santa Ana might look. There are reasonably priced imported beers and craft spirits, and it touts a rotating menu of inventive dishes that shouldn't cost more than \$7.

But the wow factor for local bands looking for a gig doesn't come until you make your way to the back of the bar, then through a black door to the main hall that instantly becomes a space sprawling with potential. In fact, the venue—known as Festival Bar to the *cadena*-wearing public—has to be pretty intimidating for plenty of local acts who see it for the first time. For the past 35 years, the dance hall has housed countless weekend *norteño*, *tejano* and *banda* concerts, booking acts such as Originales, Karlos Quintero and Los Hermanos Arellano (no relation to our editor in chief... well, maybe). Chef and former gallery owner Richard Espinachio has opened Diego's as a bar that shares the venue with Festival for much of the week (Monday through Thursday), booking everything from freeform art shows to local theater to psychedelic-rock lineups.

Espinachio, 48, approached the owners of the building last year about throwing shows, and they said yes, allowing him to have the place to himself during the week. Since then, Diego's has had a few concerts and is now getting some buzz from local bands; it has also started working with Eric Keilman, a

former local talent buyer from Detroit Bar, to bring in bands.

"We're starting to really partner with the local art community, and we're staying in line with what the downtown area is supposed to be," Espinachio says. "We're really fortunate; we have a restaurant and a space to book art and music all under one roof."

It's also a well-placed live-music foil to the Yost Theater, which is bigger than Diego's but is mostly concentrated on EDM. Now that plenty of bands are looking for decent rooms to play other than the Observatory, Diego's could offer a much needed option.

"The space has a lot of potential; the sound is pretty good," says Brennan Roach, half of Santa Ana art-rock duo Time and Energy. The band played there recently with fellow hometown acts the Flying Hand and Evan Geesman. "You could tell it's not like every other bar, with super-expensive drinks. Seems like it's more there for the community."

That's exactly how Espinachio wants it to feel. Prior to opening Diego's, the Santa Ana native owned and operated an art gallery for 25 years near Yost owner Dennis Llyu's legendary Koo's Cafe. He says the venue side of Diego's, which runs various events through the week, will be managed similarly as an all-encompassing space for creative types to host nights and parties around their work, whether it's bands, dancers, painters or acting troupes.

"It's almost like a big, blank canvas," he says, "and we're basically just waiting for musicians to come in and do what they want with it."

According to Espinachio, he doesn't require bands or promoters to pay him for ticket sales and only makes money off of the bar and restaurant, which makes his spot a rarity. He says he's happy to work with artists, as well as the *banda* crowd, to make sure the partnership with Festival is mutually beneficial and not just another stab at gentrification.

"We're trying to show everybody that we're actually part of what Santa Ana was before, with the Latin community and also with the future," he says, "so we're able to accommodate both sides of that community."

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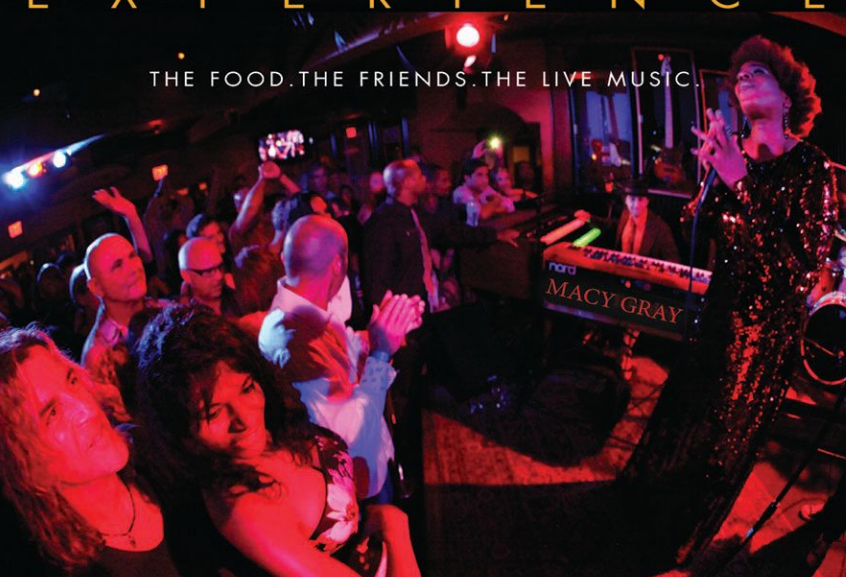
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PROPAGANDHI May 25	BRODY DALE MAY 29	LOGIC JUNE 4	THE FAINT JUNE 5 ROOM ABUSE
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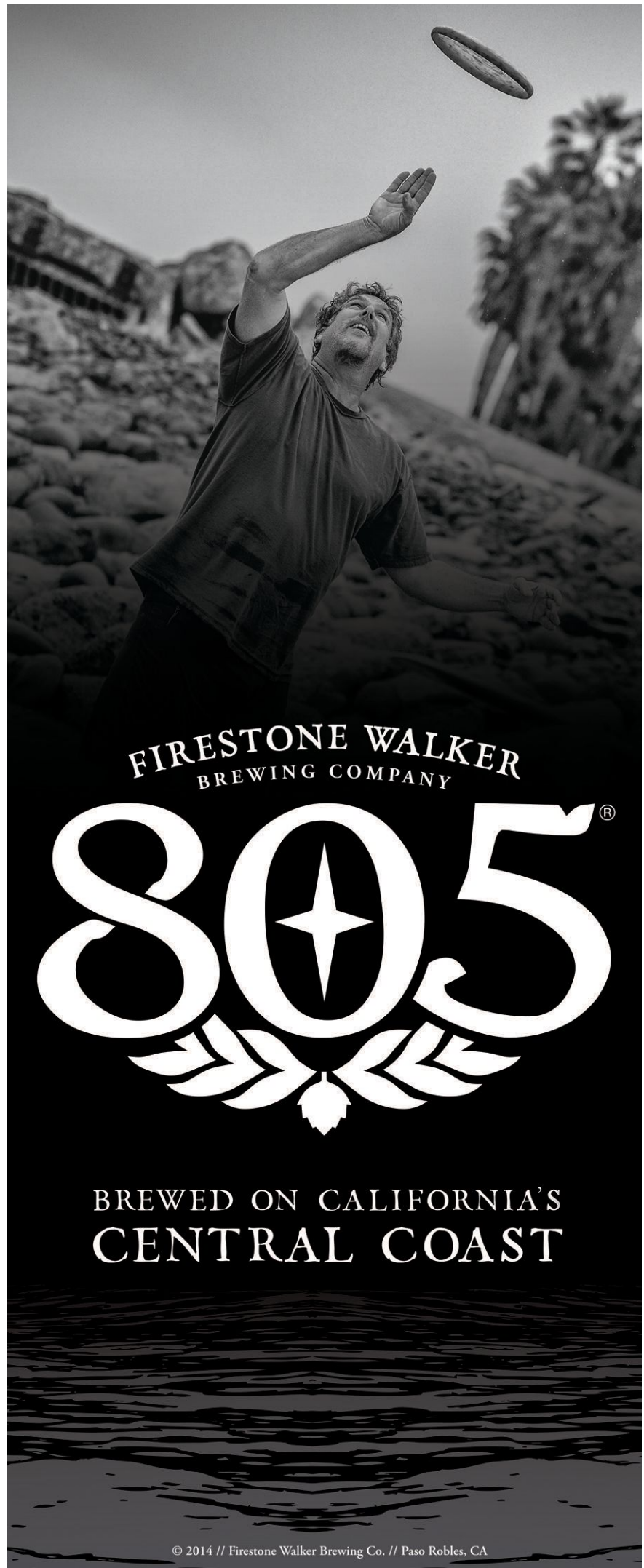
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FRIDAY, APRIL 11

CASH'D OUT: Moonlight Trio, Angel & the Badmen, JW Long & the Weyman Creek Boys, 7 p.m., \$10-\$16. The Juke Joint, 735 N. Anaheim Blvd., Anaheim, (714) 778-1397; www.thejukejointbar.com.

CRAIG MORGAN: Chad Warrick, 8 p.m., free. House of Blues, 1530 S. Disneyland Dr., Anaheim, (714) 778-2583; www.hob.com/anaheim.

DEVILS BRIGADE: Left Alone, Death March, Hardship Anchors, 9 p.m., \$10-\$12. Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292; www.alexbar.com.

GHOUL: Iron Reagan, Occultist, ACxDC, 8 p.m., \$13. Constellation Room at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.constellationroom.com.

HOURE BAND—LIVE IN THE MUSIC GARDEN: 5:30 p.m., \$26. Angels Stadium of Anaheim, 2000 E. Gene Autry Way, Anaheim, (714) 940-2070; anaheim.angels.mlb.com.

NO HOME GANG: Internal Corrosion, Bright Dead Circle, Sorry State, Underground Alliance, 8 p.m., \$5. Blacklight District, 2500 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach; www.facebook.com/blacklight.district.3.

ROCK OF AGES: 8 p.m., \$45-\$75. City National Grove of Anaheim, 2200 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 712-2750; www.citynationalgroveofanaheim.com.

SPECIAL CLASS OF '99 REUNION SHOW: Narcoleptic Youth, The Atomic Bombs, The Radioactive Chicken Heads, The Walking Toxins, 8 p.m., \$6. Doll Hut, 107 S. Adams St., Anaheim, (714) 533-1286; www.facebook.com/worldfamousdh.

THETRUESHE: Parallel Delta, R0se, Joe Findley, Table for Six, Static Skies, Nothing Left to Say, 7 p.m., \$10. Chain Reaction, 1652 W. Lincoln Ave., Anaheim, (714) 635-6067; www.allages.com.

THE VIRUS: Evacuate, The Bad English, 8 p.m., \$15. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com.

SATURDAY, APRIL 12

BREAK ANCHOR: Roll The Tanks, French Exit, 8 p.m., free. The Slidebar Rock-N-Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-7469; www.slidebarfullerton.com.

THE LAST GANG: Walk Proud, JennaSyde and the Watchers, The Scurvy Kids, None of the Living Remain, Neverready, 6 p.m., \$5. 13th Frame Lounge, 370 E. Whittier Blvd., La Habra, (562) 526-2058.

PETE ANDERSON & ROSIE FLORES: 7:30 p.m., \$15-\$20. Don the Beachcomber, 16278 Pacific Coast Hwy., Huntington Beach, (562) 592-1321; www.donthebeachcomber.com.

RT AND THE 44S: 10 p.m., free. The Pike Bar & Fish Grill, 1836 E. Fourth St., Long Beach, (562) 437-4453; www.pikelongbeach.com.

SHOOTER JENNINGS & FRIENDS: 3 p.m., free. The Slidebar Rock-N-Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-7469; www.slidebarfullerton.com.

STICK TO YOUR GUNS: Terror, Hundredth, Counterparts, Expire, 6 p.m., \$16-\$18. Chain Reaction, 1652 W. Lincoln Ave., Anaheim, (714) 635-6067; www.allages.com.

WAYNE & WOODS: 11 p.m., \$15-\$20. The Yost Theater, 307 N. Spurgeon St., Santa Ana, (888) 862-9573; www.yosttheater.com.

YEASTIE BOYS: Mexican Tiger Robot, Crash Kills 4, Rated X, 8 p.m., \$5. Doll Hut, 107 S. Adams St., Anaheim, (714) 533-1286; www.facebook.com/worldfamousdh.

SUNDAY, APRIL 13

THE ABIGAILS RESIDENCY NIGHT 2: Corners, CVI, 9:30 p.m., free. The Continental Room, 115 W. Santa Fe Ave., Fullerton, (714) 469-1879; www.facebook.com/ContinentalRoom.

ALL TIME LOW: Man Overboard, Handguns, 8 p.m., \$25-\$27.50. House of Blues, 1530 S. Disneyland Dr., Anaheim, (714) 778-2583; www.hob.com/anaheim.

THE EXPANDERS: 5 p.m., free. The Slidebar Rock-N-Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-7469; www.slidebarfullerton.com.

I AM THE AVALANCHE: Diamond Youth, Turnover, Such a Mess, 7 p.m., \$12-\$14. Chain Reaction, 1652 W. Lincoln Ave., Anaheim, (714) 635-6067; www.allages.com.

LIL DEBBIE: Okim, 8 p.m., free. The Slidebar Rock-N-Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-7469; www.slidebarfullerton.com.

ROCK OF AGES: 8 p.m., \$45-\$75. City National Grove of Anaheim, 2200 E. Katella Ave., Anaheim, (714) 712-2750; www.citynationalgroveofanaheim.com.

MONDAY, APRIL 14

BEAR HANDS: Say Say, GRMLN, 8 p.m., \$12. Constellation Room at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.constellationroom.com.

CANYONS RESIDENCY NIGHT 2: Media Jeweler, Heathers, 9 p.m., free. The Continental Room, 115 W. Santa Fe Ave., Fullerton, (714) 469-1879; www.facebook.com/ContinentalRoom.

CHVRCHES: Austra, 7 p.m., \$23. The Glass House, 200 W. Second St., Pomona, (909) 865-3802; www.theglasshouse.us.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15

BELLA NOVELA RESIDENCY NIGHT 3: Los Mysteriosos, 9 p.m., free. The Continental Room, 115 W. Santa Fe Ave., Fullerton, (714) 469-1879; www.facebook.com/ContinentalRoom.

BONOBO: Nite Jewel, 8 p.m., \$23. The Glass House, 200 W. Second St., Pomona, (909) 865-3802; www.theglasshouse.us.

CAGE THE ELEPHANT: Juliette Lewis, 8 p.m., \$25. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com.

DUSTIN LOVELIS: Boogie Mamas, The Knew, 9 p.m., \$5. The Prospector, 2400 E. Seventh St., Long Beach, (562) 438-3839; www.prospectorlongbeach.com.

ELLIE GOULDING: 8 p.m., \$45-\$50. Fox Theater Pomona, 301 S. Garey Ave., Pomona, (877) 283-6976; www.foxpomona.com.

FUTURE ISLANDS: Ed Schrader's Music Best, 8 p.m., \$15. Constellation Room at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.constellationroom.com.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 16

A HARD DAYS NIGHT (A BEATLES TRIBUTE): DJ Wrack 'Em Frack 'Em, DJ Ody, 9:30 p.m., free. The Continental Room, 115 W. Santa Fe Ave., Fullerton, (714) 469-1879; www.facebook.com/ContinentalRoom.

EYEHATEGOD: 8 p.m., \$12. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com.

THE GODDAMN GALLOWES: HFL, 8 p.m., \$8-\$10. Alex's Bar, 2913 E. Anaheim St., Long Beach, (562) 434-8292; www.alexbar.com.

THE GREEN: Stick Figure, Hirie, 9 p.m., \$23-\$27.50. House of Blues, 1530 S. Disneyland Dr., Anaheim, (714) 778-2583; www.hob.com/anaheim.

HAIM: 8 p.m., \$27.50-\$35. Fox Theater Pomona, 301 S. Garey Ave., Pomona, (877) 283-6976; www.foxpomona.com.

SLICK RICK: 8 p.m., \$20. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com.

THURSDAY, APRIL 17

ASAP FERG: Flatbush Zombies, 7 p.m., \$27-\$29. The Glass House, 200 W. Second St., Pomona, (909) 865-3802; www.theglasshouse.us.

BRIGHT DEAD CIRCLE RESIDENCY NIGHT 3: Aunty Trust, Sample X, Aces and Eights Band, 8:30 p.m., free. Doll Hut, 107 S. Adams St., Anaheim, (714) 533-1286; www.facebook.com/worldfamousdh.

THE CIRCUITS: Eye the Realist, 8 p.m., \$5. The Federal Bar, 102 Pine Ave., Long Beach, (562) 435-2000; www.thefederalbar.com.

CROSSES: 8 p.m., \$25. The Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.observatoryoc.com.

GRAF ORLOCK: Loma Prieta, Fucking Invincible, Adult Books, The Coltranes, 7 p.m., \$10-\$12. Chain Reaction, 1652 W. Lincoln Ave., Anaheim, (714) 635-6067; www.allages.com.

THE GREEN: Stick Figure, Hirie, 9 p.m., \$23-\$27.50. House of Blues, 1530 S. Disneyland Dr., Anaheim, (714) 778-2583; www.hob.com/anaheim.

MIKE PETERS: The Ferns, Hellbound Eddie, 8 p.m., \$15. The Coach House, 33157 Camino Capistrano, Ste. C, San Juan Capistrano, (949) 496-8930; www.thecoachhouse.com.

NO: Dear Boy, Night Riots, The Hard Knocks, 8 p.m., free. The Slidebar Rock-N-Roll Kitchen, 122 E. Commonwealth Ave., Fullerton, (714) 871-7469; www.slidebarfullerton.com.

TEMPLES: Drowners, 8 p.m., \$15. Constellation Room at the Observatory, 3503 S. Harbor Blvd., Santa Ana, (714) 957-0600; www.constellationroom.com.

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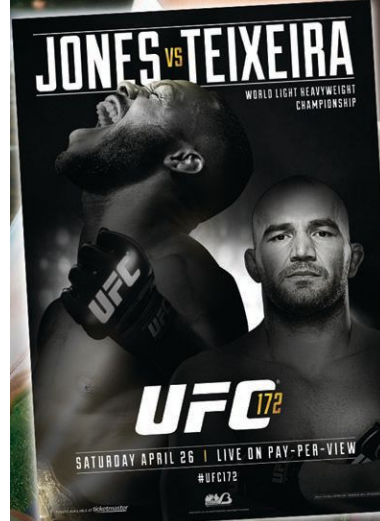
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» TAYLOR HAMBY

'Shut Up and Drink It'

The Glo Room in Anaheim shines thanks to saucy bartender Kay

"If this drink makes me throw up or gives me a hangover, I'm never coming back," a young woman said to our bartender.

"Shut up and take it," the bartender snapped back.

That's Kay, the blond spitfire who runs busy nights at the infamous Glo Room in Anaheim by herself—with precision and a low tolerance for bullshit. She's petite, even in her high-wedge shoes, with a Carol Brady haircut that's bleached on top and has patches of black underneath. She told me she does her own hair—apparently in her past life, she owned a beauty salon.

But that was 30 years ago, and she's been here at the Glo Room ever since. "I been here so long, I serve the grandpa, the son and now the grandson," she said. "The grandsons hit on me, and I tell them, 'Your grandpa hit on me. Your dad hit on me. I don't fuck them. What make you think I fuck you?'"

"You don't look old enough to have been working here 30 years," I volunteered.

"I'm 64—I turn 65 this year!" she said.

"No, I don't believe you. Let me see your ID," I said, jokingly referring to when she gave me shit earlier in the evening while checking my ID, saying I look too young to be drinking. She assured me she really is in her 60s and has sons in their 30s and 40s. "I can't even speak English, but my son—he has master's degree."

While many bartenders act outwardly unfazed by drunken shenanigans, Kay will openly stare with visible contempt at any boozy tomfoolery. "What the fuck," she'll say, dead serious. "I work here 30 fucking years. Sometimes, I just don't even know anymore." In this case she was referring to the rowdy young men twerking one another near the dart boards.

While we talked, two heavy-set men sat next to me—one wearing a Dodgers shirt, the other a red polo (don't go downtown HB chick fight on us!). A large stack of cash sat in front of them; since the bar's cash-only, I didn't think much of it at the time.

"I got you Jäger," Kay said as she walked with a shot glass filled to the brim with the licorice liqueur in each hand, the booze sloshing out the top as she walked. "Shut up and take it."

"Uh-oh," they both said, before knocking their drinks back.

"Love you, Kay!" Dodgers Dude said.

A short while later, a pretty young black lady joined the two large men at the bar. I heard a bit of their conversation.

"Where do you work?" asked Red Polo.

"California Girl!" Kay interjected.

A few minutes passed before Red Polo touched the stack of cash in front of him and asked the young lady, "If I give you

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\$100 right now, what does that get me?"

She leaned forward to whisper in his ear. He pushed her back: "Just tell me."

I couldn't hear her response over the loud

Friday night crowd and fifth song in a row by Social D blasting from the jukebox. But I did hear his response: "Ah, I could get that any time." Smooth.

Suddenly, the ground started shaking. I had just finished my first beer, so I knew it wasn't my delirium tremens. Earthquake! One of the largest shakes I've felt in a while rolled through the bar. The crowd began to hoot and holler and when it finally ended, my fellow drunks let out a triumphant cheer. A young man in a backwards cap ran up and reached over the bar to high-five Kay.

After we all calmed down, the tallest guy in the room—wearing rolled-up jeans and flip-flops—came up to the bar to order. He leaned over to me. "You should really talk to her," he said, pointing at Kay. "You can't understand half the shit she says, but she's fucking hilarious. I've been coming here for years," he said. "She tells me I'm like her son. Then she tells me to go fuck myself."

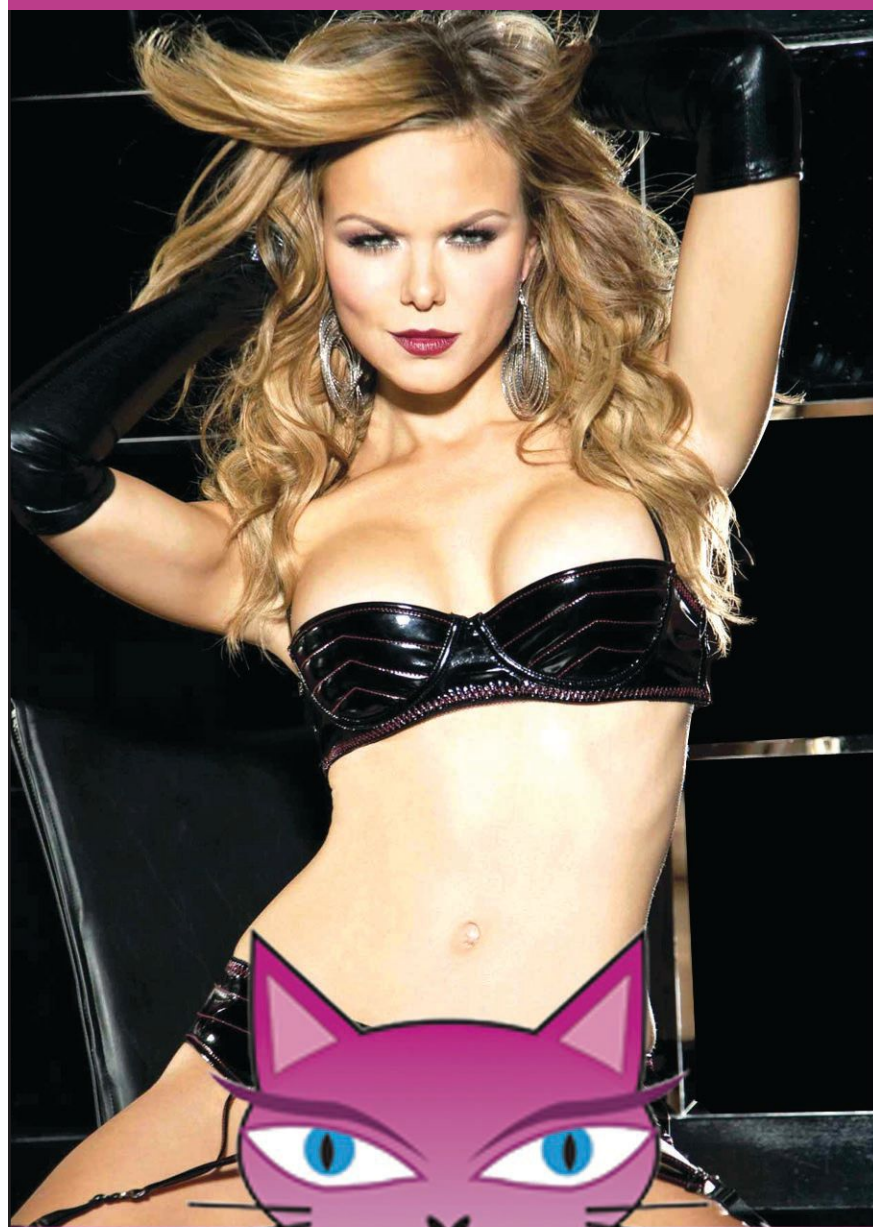
Kay approached the tall guy with perfect, unintentional timing. "Hey, Shorty," she said. "Go fuck yourself. What you want to drink?"

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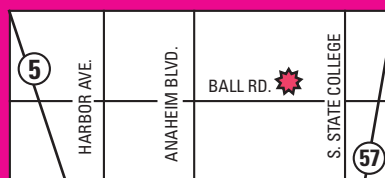
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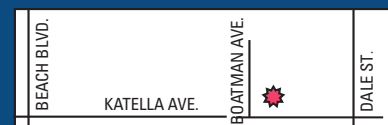
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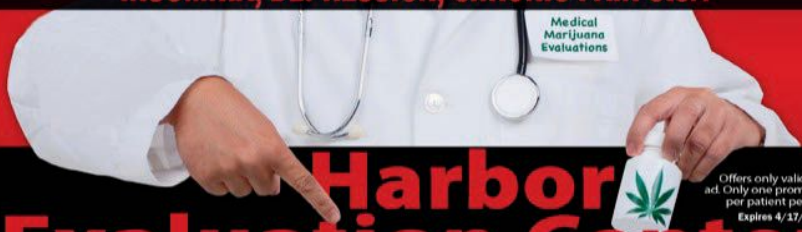
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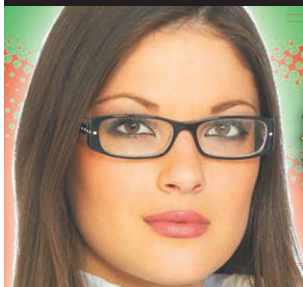
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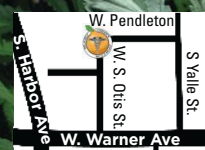
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▼ Free Will Astrology

By Rob Breznay

ARIES (March 21-April 19): Freedom is the most important kind of joy you can seek right now. It's also the most important subject to study and think about, as well as the most important skill to hone. I advise you to make sure that freedom is flowing through your brain and welling up in your heart and spiraling through your loins. Write synonyms for "freedom" on your arm with a felt-tip pen: liberation, emancipation, independence, leeway, spaciousness, carte blanche, self-determination, dispensation. Here's one more tip: Connect yourself with people who love and cultivate the same type of freedom you do.

TAURUS (April 20-May 20): It's Love Your Messes Week, Taurus. In accordance with the astrological omens, you are authorized to love the hell out of the messes in your life -- from the small, awkward knots of confusion to the big, beautiful heaps of fertile chaos. This is not a time to feel embarrassed or apologize for your messes; not a time to shy away from them or ignore them. On the contrary, you should explore them, celebrate them, and even take advantage of them. Whatever else they are, your messes are untapped sources of energy. Learn to love them for the mysterious lessons they keep teaching you. Love them for the courage and willpower they compel you to summon. Love them for the novelty they bring your way and the interesting stories they add to your personal legend.

GEMINI (May 21-June 20): "A snowball's chance in hell" is an American idiom that's equivalent to saying "it probably won't happen." After all, a snowball would instantly melt if exposed to the scorching fires that rage in the underworld. But what if there's an exception to this axiom? Let's call on another American idiom: "when hell freezes over." It's another way to say "it probably won't happen." But the truth is that now and then a cold front does indeed sweep through the infernal region, icing its flames. When that happens, a snowball's prospects of surviving there improve dramatically. And that's exactly what I predict will happen for you in the coming week.

CANCER (June 21-July 22): In 2007, J. K. Rowling finished writing the seventh volume of her seven Harry Potter books, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows.* The day it was published it sold 11 million copies. But Rowling had actually written the final chapter of this last book way back in 1990, when she first conceived the story she was to spend the next 17 years working on. She knew the climax right from the beginning. I foresee a similar theme unfolding for you in the coming weeks, Cancerian. As you plot a project you will be developing for a long time to come, you will have a vision of what it will be when it becomes fully mature.

LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): When you see your shadow, it's usually right next to you. It's there on the ground or floor, a fuzzy black shape that follows you around closely. But today I saw my shadow waving back at me from afar. I was standing on top of a hill, and the sun's rays created a dusky version of me in the meadow way down below. I think this is a useful metaphor for an opportunity that's available to you. In the coming days, you will be able to view the shadowy, undeveloped parts of your personality as if from a distance. That means you will have more objectivity about them, and thus greater compassion. You can get a calm, clear sense of how they might be mucking with your happiness and how you could transform them.

VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): "You cannot use butterfly language to communicate with caterpillars," said psychologist Timothy Leary. That's good advice for you to keep in mind in the near future. You might want to find a way to carry on constructive dialogs with people who have a hard time understanding you. It's not necessarily that they are stupid or resistant to your charms. The problem is that they haven't experienced some of the

critical transformations you have. They can't be expected to converse with you in your butterfly language. Are you willing and able to speak caterpillar?

LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Are you thinking of linking your fortunes to a new ally? Or deepening your collaboration with a familiar ally? Have you fantasized about bonding intensely with a source that may be able to give you more of what you want and bring out more of the best in you? These prospects are worth contemplating, Libra. But I suggest you let your connection ripen a bit more before finalizing the shift. I'm not necessarily saying there's a potential problem. I simply suspect that you need further exploration and additional information before you can make the smartest move possible.

SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Saturn has been in the sign of Scorpio since October 2012 and will be there until the end of 2014. (It will make another visit from June to September 2015.) What does that mean? I have a view of Saturn that's different from many astrologers. They regard it as the planet of limitation, struggle, and difficulty. Here's what I think: While Saturn may push you to be extra tough and work super hard, it also inspires you to cut away extraneous desires and home in on your deepest purpose. It motivates you to build strong structures that free you to express yourself with maximum efficiency and grace.

SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): When I took an intermediate painting class in college, our first assignment was to imitate an old master. My choice was the Flemish painter Pieter Breugel the Elder (1525-1569). I worked on reproducing his painting *The Fight Between Carnival and Lent* as precisely as I could. It was tedious and liberating. I invoked Breugel's spirit and prayed for his guidance. I sank my psyche deeply into his. By the end of the four-week process I'd learned a lot about painting. Given the current astrological omens, Sagittarius, I suggest you try something similar. Pick someone who excels at a way of working or a state of being that you would like to master yourself, and copy that person for a while. For best results, have fun with it. Play!

CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Capricorn author J. R. R. Tolkien spent 14 years working on *The Lord of the Rings.* In using a typewriter to produce over 1,200 pages, he relied solely on his two index fingers. He never learned the ten-finger typing method. I suppose it didn't matter in the end. Presumably, his impediment didn't affect the quality of his work, but only made it harder to accomplish and required him to spend a lot more time. Is there a fixable limitation on your own ability to achieve your dream, Capricorn? Is there some handicap you could, with effort, overcome? If so, now would be an excellent time to begin.

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): "The truth's superb surprise," wrote poet Emily Dickinson, may be "too bright for our infirm delight." Sometimes we've got to be careful about articulating what's really going on. "The truth must dazzle gradually," she said. If it hits us too fast and hard, it may be difficult to digest. So did Emily suggest that we should lie and deceive? No. "Tell all the truth," she declared, "but tell it slant." This is excellent advice for you in the coming days, Aquarius.

PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Here's my report on your progress. You are not struggling to embody a delusional state of perfection as it is imagined by other people. Rather, you are becoming an ever-more soulful version of your idiosyncratic self, evolving slowly but surely. You are not dazedly trudging along a narrow track laid down by thousands of sheep. Instead, you are lively and creative as you bushwhack a path for yourself through the wilderness. To celebrate this ongoing success, Pisces, I suggest you get yourself a new power object that symbolizes your inventive devotion.

Homework: Write a short essay on "How I Created Something Out of Nothing." Go to FreeWillAstrology.com and click on "Email Rob."

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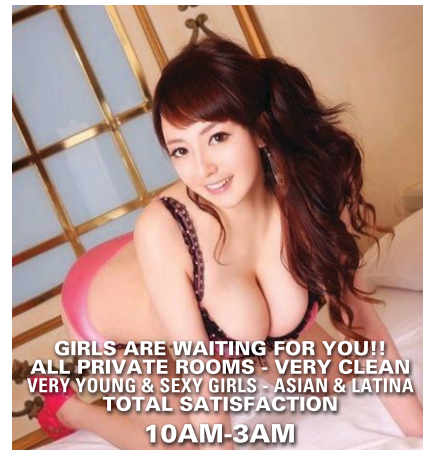


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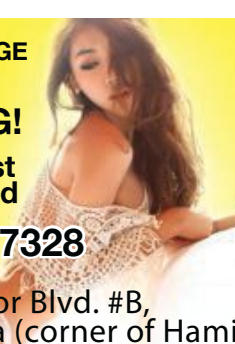
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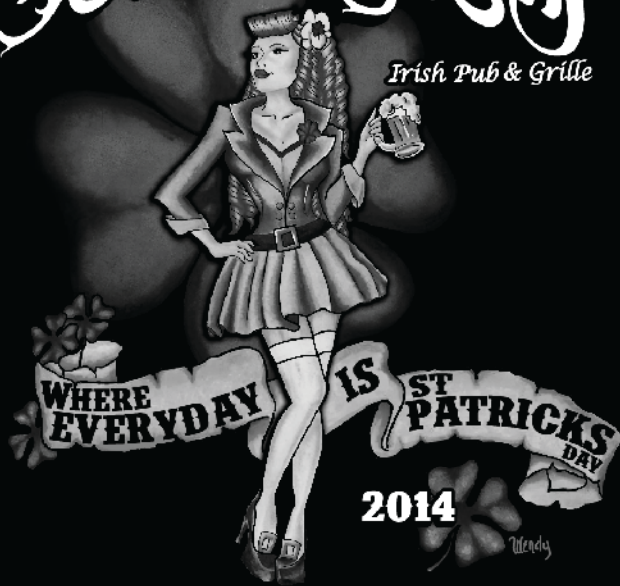


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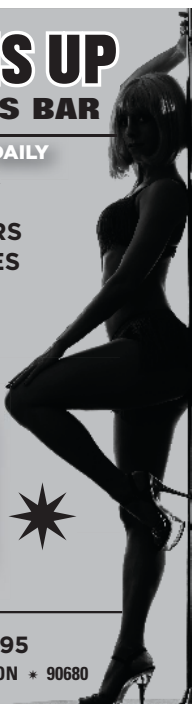
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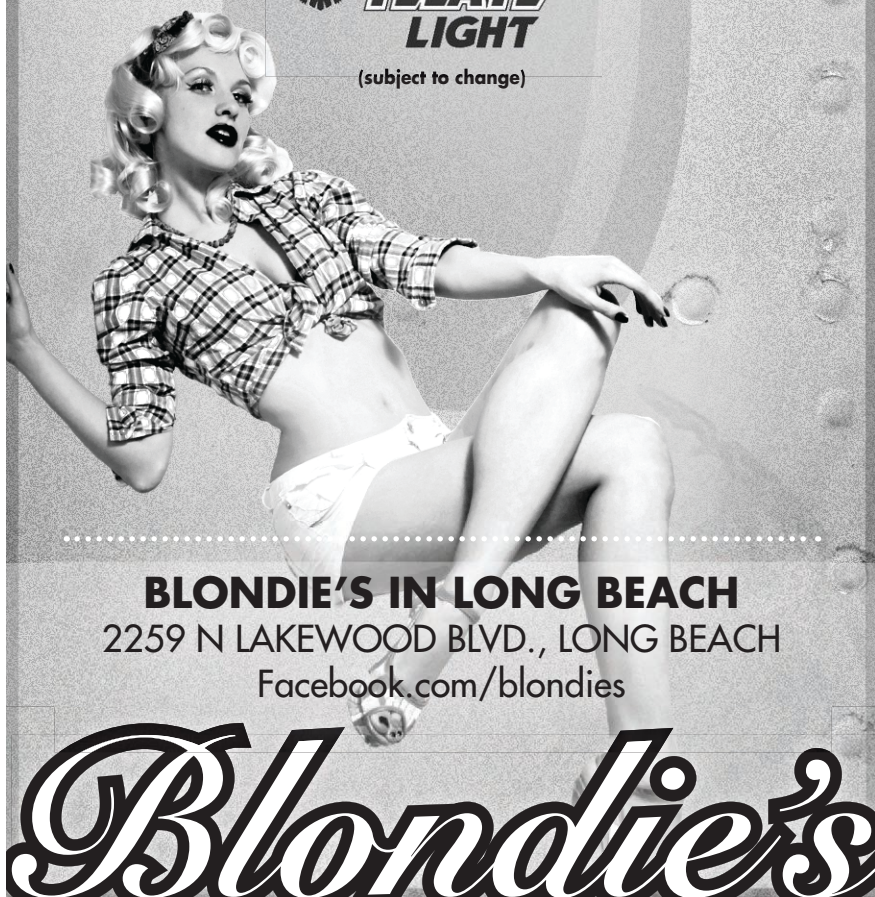
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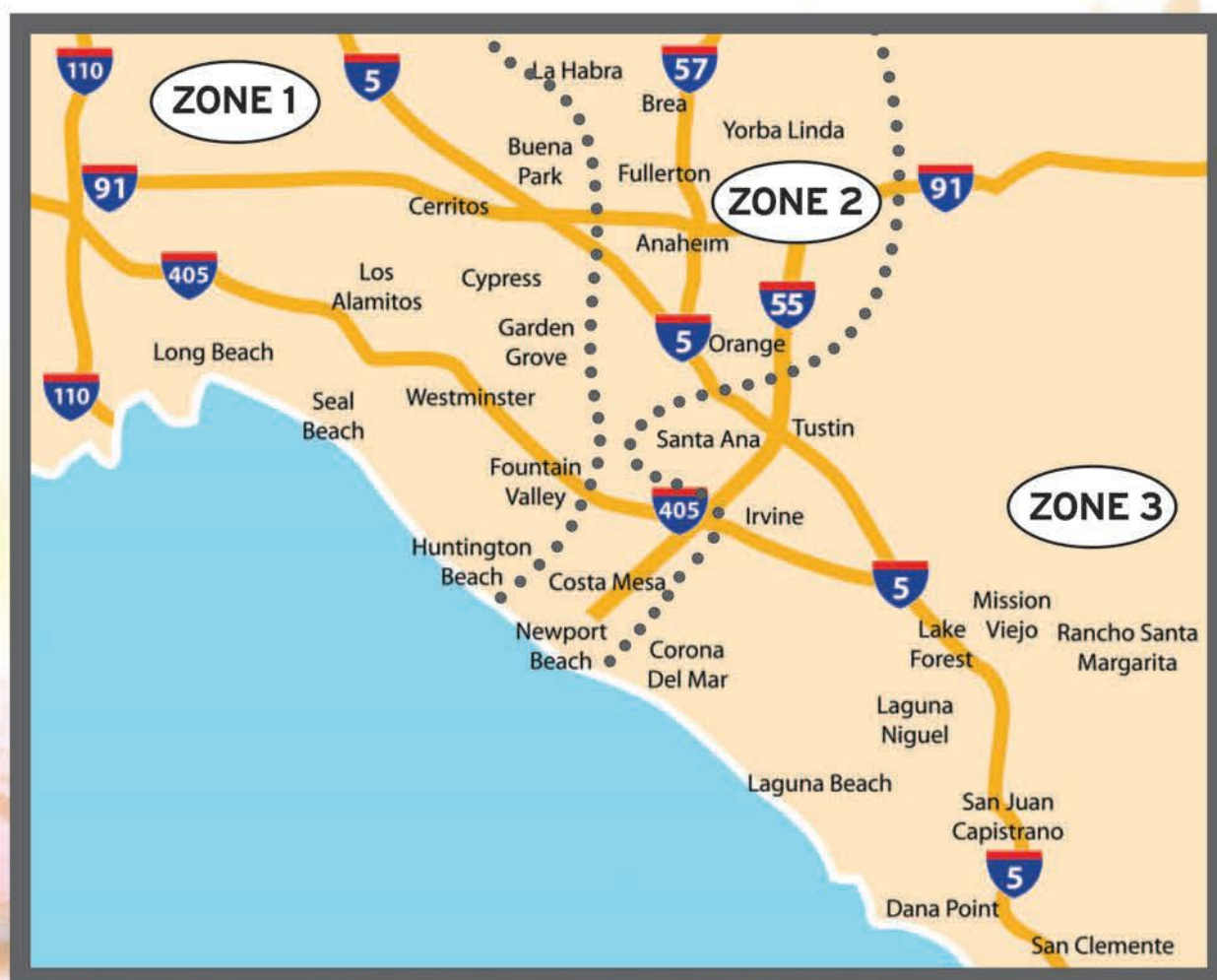
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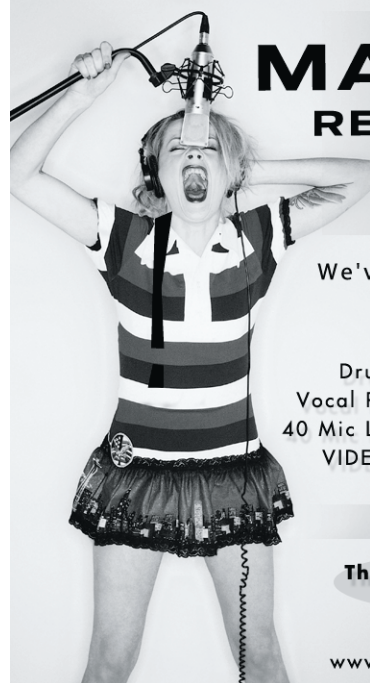
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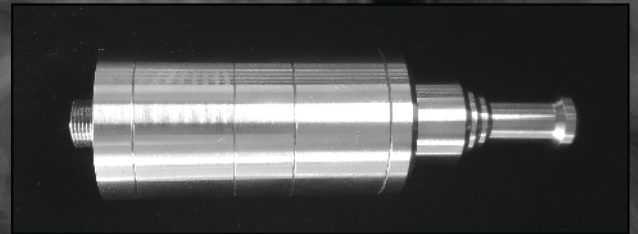


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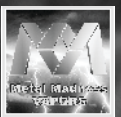
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